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18 November 2026



rooting empowering reactivating

Rehabilitation of traditional heritage and local development

Martina Bocci and Andrea Bocco (eds.)

rooting
empowering
reactivating

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Politecnico di Torino

2024
Politecnico di Torino



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to nonna Elena and Edalia



5

ROUND TABLES

I. Sklavounos. Source: Boulouki Archive

5.1

LOCAL COMMUNITY



The (fruitful?) dialogue of inside and outside



Andrea Bocco

This panel is about the dualisms bottom-up/top-down, and outside/inside. I am concerned about how recovery initiatives are experienced by local communities.
We have often noticed that those who first value a certain traditional heritage are not those who live in the area, but those who observe it from the outside.
Yona Friedman said, with the lucid intelligence that characterised him, "the 'beauty' of a building [is] what an outsider who does not use the building sees"(Friedman 1978, 38). A memorable sentence. Friedman meant that the inhabitant first and foremost cares that the building works well, that it meets their needs. The attribute "beautiful" is typically conferred by someone else, who that building did not build and does not inhabit.
Not that people have done things randomly, without a sense of harmony; but the aesthetic purpose for beauty's sake is something just the rich can afford, and all in all is quite recent, compared to the use value of the built heritage and everyday things in general.
This is the history of many districts that have had an extraordinary success in terms of image: for example, the success of Chianti and Tuscany in general began centuries ago, and should be ascribed to English travellers, who "discovered" that those places were "beautiful". Now even we Italians take it for granted that they are.
The founder of the Canova Association is in fact an American, who was seduced by Ossola's stone houses. Mind you, Santino Langé's book already existed (1989). But neither Santino Langé was born in Crevoladossola.
Therefore we can recognise a perhaps fundamental, or in any case important, role of the external look in the valorisation of the lesser heritage; a look that can recognise an aesthetic value also for ideological reasons. It is not a role to be underestimated, because beauty is one of the most powerful driving forces behind a subsequent enhancement intervention.
(By the way, the word "beauty" was academically taboo until yesterday or the day before yesterday, and perhaps still today it is not much admitted in intellectual circles. But if you scratch under those more convoluted formulas that describe a building such as, for example, "Property of historical/architectural documentary value", underneath it there is someone who said "wow! how cool!" But intellectuals cannot say "how cool" in public and even less in a scientific publication – they have to use an exoteric jargon.)
So I am ready to recognise a utility in the outsider's gaze.

But it is not that insiders do not realise the value of their own heritage because they are ignorant of the evolution of cultural thought and perhaps of aesthetic

fashions – it is because they often associate that heritage with backwardness, fatigue, poverty. At a certain point of their history, they need some kind of social redemption that passes through the refusal of a certain heritage.
If we rich Italians are not in that condition, it is because we have already gone through it. In passing through it we have devastated our landscape and destroyed thousands of buildings.
It seems to me that this phenomenon has an undulatory motion. It has a peak moment in which traditional buildings are rejected, and one or two generations later someone will complain: "What has my father done? What did my grandfather do? How could he knock down that wonderful traditional house and build a concrete one next door?"
In other countries the destructive wave is coming now. When an outside group, although armed with the best intentions, recognises a value in a heritage system and comes to restore it, there is a serious risk. Often the attitude of these people towards the locals is basically "You don't understand a thing, we are the ones who recognise the value of your stuff". The insiders, for their part, often don't understand what the outsiders are doing, and point out their arrogance: "What do they want from us? They come to teach us what's good and what is bad, they even bother us because we'd like to add a room, put a satellite dish, create a garage inside the house, and want to prevent us from doing that".

Therefore, my question is about the dialectics between outsiders and insiders. As I said before, the groups that have worked to recover the traditional local heritage in marginal areas often came from outside (an exception is the case of Gjirokastra: the Foundation was born from the town itself). These groups should be aware of the consequences of their action in terms of possible social conflicts or economic problems.
Try to imagine that someone decides that in a certain area (for reasons of preservation of the landscape, heritage, authenticity...) only a certain material, traditional of that area, should be used; and that they also codify the way that material should be laid out, according to the same logic with which 'legitimate' *pesto genovese* is codified.
In this regard, reading Angelini seems fundamental to me: he investigated Genova's hinterland and found a host of traditional family *pesto* recipes. How do you tell a grandma who lives in the Genoese Apennines that her family's recipe is not the authentic one, because the right one is the Pesto IGP recipe? Clearly the grandma is right. And this grandmother is even more right, if the grandmother from the house opposite says "In my family pesto has always been made in this other way" (Angelini 2005).
What I mean is that the introduction of a norm may kill the practices, and what's more, it often ends up expelling local people from traditional buildings. Let me explain better: if a rule states that stones must be laid in the roofing in a certain specific way, and in the whole valley there are only two old craftspeople left who know how to lay stones in that way and redoing the covering of a 23 m^2 building costs 30.000 €, then the rule – perhaps beyond the intentions of those who wrote it and enforced it – implies that the locals move into new buildings made of reinforced concrete, and the traditional houses become second, third or fourth houses for

rich tourists, as the latter are those who ‘understand the value of the heritage’ (and can, of course, afford the monetary burden of its legally acceptable restauration). The risk that the imposed authenticity will result in expulsion and economic discrimination is very great. These issues are of particular concern to us.
To be more specific about regulations: the real point is about discerning rules intended as an obligation and which have above all descriptive characters (those that prescribe the use of a certain material, impose the adoption of a typological solution, etc.); and "tool" rules. When rules are tools, it is hoped that they are tools that you keep on the side of the handle, and that you use to do what you need. By definition the tool is useful – as long as it is not sharp and the blade does not point to your belly. I am absolutely convinced of the usefulness of the "tool" rules, all the more so in case of performance standards, i.e. they express principles and objectives, and do not prescribe solutions. They do not say: "You have to do this (and do it this way!)", but rather: "Make sure that what you do allows you to achieve this kind of result".
The regulations that I cannot tolerate are those that postulate things like: if you don’t put this much of extra virgin olive oil, this much of basil, this much of pine nuts, etc., it’s not pesto. Angelini reports that in the hinterland of Genova there are even elderly women who make pesto with no basil. It’s not an innovation by a creative chef; it’s a family tradition.
Finally, I would like to add that in my opinion heritage is codified and its transformation over time is hindered when people are afraid, when they feel threatened. While a self-confident society is much freer to interpret, hybridise, even ‘betray’ its own traditions.

Unfortunately, even in countries that are demographically much younger and still growing, like Latin American countries, a fairly rapid and extensive process of territorial polarisation is taking place: people are moving to big cities, often at lower altitudes. Even on the Andean plateau where the Fundación Altiplano works, only a few old people now reside. In the territories covered by the NGOs at this seminar, the number of residual inhabitants is still greater than in Elva, a village in the Piemonte western Alps where there are more dead on the monument to the fallen of WWI than living residents today – but it is only a matter of being a little ahead or a little behind in a process that is similar in those marginal places, even if they are physically very far apart.
Having said that, let’s do a purely fictional exercise: a handful of people from this room sets up an association and decide to recover one of the ten thousand more or less abandoned villages that exist in the Alps.
Who is the community of this village? Us "settlers", with all our good intentions and our intentional community cohesion? Or those who, although not living there, still own a house and maybe return there each summer? Of course they are, they too are local community. If not themselves, their parents must have been born in that house. That village is theirs somehow. And certainly, are local community that elderly couple who still, in defiance of any economic convenience, and any consideration of practicality, prefer to live there and perhaps remain isolated for a fortnight in winter when the avalanche comes down, rather than go down to their children who have moved to Dronero, Borgo San Dalmazzo, or Cuneo.

I will keep forever in my memory a woman in her eighties who lived in a village in a side valley of Valsesia. Almost blind, she lived alone in a hamlet, not reachable with a motor vehicle. I was surveying the whole village, and I went to meet her. She followed me, in the sense that she perceived where I was. In the morning, she would go out, collect the egg, a few herbs from the garden and then we would chat a little. She would say to me "Yes, they tried to take me down! I had to be admitted to the hospital in Varallo, but as soon as I could, I ran away and came back here, because I felt caged there!" A neighbour, who was also elderly and who also lived alone, in the village below, once every one or two days passed by, just to know if she was all right. They would say hello to each other, and he would come back down. That was her life.

Why do I tell this pathetic story? Because if we outsiders decided that that village is beautiful and has beautifully preserved houses and everything, and we wanted to revitalise it, we could only start from that residual community that person represents. Not against her, even if the demographic survival of that village can only be entrusted to possible new inhabitants (who perhaps have ethnically, if you allow me, nothing to do with that village: maybe the new inhabitants were born in another region and fell in love with that place or with the possibilities which that place provides, for example of a life 'in contact with nature', where you can practice organic farming because the land has not been contaminated, etc.).

What I mean is that, unless we are facing an archaeological excavation, some form of community exists.

I remember a very difficult job, which in fact failed, on a hamlet in Ossola where there was no longer any resident, but there were obviously some owners, most of whom lived quite close. Whatever we proposed to do on those buildings, they were against it. You will say: "They were letting the buildings go to hell and yet they were opposing a redevelopment project?" Of course they were, that was their home! They were right, from a certain point of view. Despite the fact that their plan was to let everything collapse as long as no strangers touched anything. This is certainly not gratifying, as a project that a community can give itself with respect to its future. The active participation of a community in the rehabilitation programme is crucial.

5.1.1 Dynamics between local communities and outsiders

Andrea B.

All the NGOs attract people often from far away and even from abroad, to more or less marginal places, for instance to carry out 'field school' training activities. The organisers themselves are mostly alien to the local communities.
What are the **dynamics between the local communities and these outsiders**?
Locals often do not understand what these strangers want from them and their territory; non-locals often feel superior to locals because of their greater formal education or monetary wealth and do not understand why locals do not roll out a red carpet under their feet.
In your experience, does **suspicion or cooperation** prevail?
Is there a **positive evolution** of the relationship between insiders and outsiders over time, one that gives hope for some form of fruitful, mutual hybridisation?

Chiara (SBAP)

Hybridisation is surely the most correct term we can use to answer your question. In the School's experience (I'm speaking both as a former student and as a teacher) the relationship between theoretical approaches and direct contact with the complexity of real yards has always been preached and practised.
The opportunities to deal with locals have therefore been a constant, and paradigmatically prescribed, characteristic in its organisation, aimed at a mutual acceptance – this is the first step – and subsequently at a profitable hybridisation. We normally organised preliminary surveys, to 'take the temperature' of the context, to verify the level of public engagement in affairs concerning the landscape or monuments, and then to select the (not only academically or professionally) best qualified stakeholders, to be introduced to the specificity of the places. We consider – I think this is one of the assets of the School – each place as a sort of *unicum* (with its own values and characteristics, representing the 'identity of the place').
For example, we worked hard, and for more than a decade, on the identity of a wide- and partially wild-area between Piemonte and Liguria. The local community is very involved in landscape protection, and extremely aware – even fiercely proud – both for traditional reasons and because of the condition of living in a border area. Historically that border was not between administrative regions as today, rather between States, with spies, ambassadors, armies, and tradesmen crossing it. This transit left a wide consciousness in the population remaining there (a quantity emigrated to bigger cities, like Cuneo, Torino, Savona, Genova), who is extremely aware of its historical relevance, even nowadays, when they suffer from the reduction of commerce, redirected on more comfortable routes and from the general industrial crisis – there used to be factories there since the 18th century, which were established by the rich local aristocracy, first of all the very powerful marquis of Ormea, minister of the King. We were not in a position to teach them anything... and we started to listen to them, to learn, and there was a lot to learn!
On the other hand, their legitimate pride was not supported by a methodological approach to their history: they were extremely wavering in their analysis, not always objective in the examination of sources, obviously not neutral when looking

to their landscape... We have been extremely gentle (and it was natural to be so, as they have always been openly courteous in receiving us and let us feel at home in their own home) in proposing our interpretations and in suggesting more detachment while observing the complexity and richness of their territory. We found extraordinary, open-minded interlocutors.
In other contexts, sometimes, relations have been a little less straightforward, but we could always find a solution, without pouts or discussions: it's only a matter of mutual respect and, happily, this has always been given for granted!

Edvin (FG)

I agree with the idea of involving the community, which we do, even though sometimes it is difficult.
We now have cases in Albania where decision-makers pretend to involve communities through so-called public consultations, but often this is only in theory. Sometimes the idea of consulting and involving the public is abused. We have as well examples which show that sometimes consulting the public can be a failure: for instance, in rural areas people are not always well educated and don't understand what we do. Sometimes having to deal with the community is very confusing, but I am happy if we do it, and it is obvious that they will benefit. I want to stress that if you are a team of technicians and architects you also benefit in understanding them and wanting them to really understand you, otherwise it is just pretending.
When we bring groups in training to Gjirokastra, we try to accommodate them in guesthouses run by local families, and a great accord always builds up between students and locals.
In Albania, not only in Gjirokastra, these are very good situations because the locals always like the idea of receiving foreigners. If you walk down the street in front of an old house, they will open the door and they will invite you in, which is a great thing. They have a genuine approach to everything which comes from abroad and to foreign visitors in the town. Usually, locals get along very well with visitors and they engage a lot in helping with hands-on work projects, with the volunteers and so on.
But when it comes to complex, big projects, dealing with the community is very serious because the discussion is not always truthful. For instance, stone roofs are one of the main features of the built heritage in Gjirokastra, but there are examples of illegal constructions which have abused the original building by using concrete, so it is still a challenge: the inhabitants want to live in a 'contemporary house'; a traditional stone roof needs frequent maintenance while a concrete one is considered to be more durable. We are having this issue with the roofs because owners want to insulate properly, but wood and stone were traditionally laid *a secco* [dry construction]. People have the right to live a conventional life in their own properties. Just saying to them that their house is a beautiful monument and they have to respect the conservative restoration principles is not enough. This is a real struggle in the field, which involves us and the authorities, who sometimes close an eye and pretend they didn't see the concrete mixer going in into the historic town.
Sometimes I think that restoration has rather become diplomacy, and decision making. Maybe we need to invent another word.

Maurizio (AC)

Sometimes it is not easy to share what we are doing with the community. Some understand very well, some don't; but I don't think this is a problem.
We always try to involve the community and the local authorities.
I will tell you my personal experience. I studied Landscape and historical preservation at the University of Milan and, when I returned to the [Ossola] valley, my world was falling into pieces because of the gap between what I had learnt at the university (which was, of course, a lot) and the reality of the place where I grew up. The coming back – the being a U-turn immigrant, as the Japanese call people who were raised in a community and come back to the community after formal training – taught me that what I needed was to work with my hands. Understanding this changed my life: I started working hands-on with Associazione Canova. So, I started from the humblest level, from the ground. This in an important way to earn the respect of the community and it is what happened when locals saw what we were doing. Therefore, I can witness through my direct experience that what we do is important for the community as well.

Lorenzo (BdF)

From our point of view, restoring a stone roof with heritage conservation methods is sometimes very difficult to explain to local people, but it is very easy when you are talking with people from abroad who, for example, bought a stone house in the area. Why are people from abroad so open to heritage conservation methods and why are the local people so far from this idea?
It seems clear that being surrounded by something does not make its beauty appreciable; while taking a step back can awaken this awareness.

Nadia (BdF)

Since we work a lot in the summer, our workshops are attended mostly by university students: this helps us be welcomed in the community because locals love seeing young people working all day and enjoying it. Local people are, in a way, very proud of the fact that there are young people there working in the restoration of the local built heritage, even more so if it is the property of the municipality.
The elderly craftspeople involved are also locals. We notice that they feel part of this project and they talk about what they do with their families and friends who come to see what is going on.
Another way to involve the community in what we are doing is holding social events such as open-air cinema nights, social dinners, open lectures etc.
The Association wants to create a disperse hotel which is supposed to be managed in the future by an enterprise of local young people. In fact, it is not easy to find young residents in the area. For example, we need someone to clean or cook for the students but it's not easy to find them because just a few people live there nowadays.

Junko (DSW)

In the interaction between communities and students, local communities are very kind, perhaps they even feel a little proud because the students come from outside and therefore, they think that some value is acknowledged to their place.

Beatriz (FA)

I think that there are many possibilities according to the kind of heritage you are working on. In our case it is the living heritage of Andean communities. Since the heritage you are working on is alive, you have to put away your mind as a technician, and read the needs of the community. Manfred Max-Neef affirmed that all humans have the same basic needs (Max-Neef, Elizalde, and Hopenhayn 1994). These include subsistence, protection, affection, understanding: Andean communities share such needs with all humans on earth. For example, we were working in Tacora in a façades restoration project and as technicians we proposed to paint the metal roofs in oxide colour because we thought that over time roofs would naturally oxidise anyway. The community said: "No, that colour makes the village look like it was abandoned and old! We want shining colours, we want gold, we want silver..." So, we understood that they needed to assert "Hey, we are here, we are surviving the abandonment of the village and we want it look as new." As technicians, we wouldn't have been able to imagine this. I think we need to look through the lens of the needs of the community when we work with living heritage.

The Chilean government doesn't invest in new projects if the local community does not manage its own heritage; this is a very wise stance from the public side which prevents public money to be wasted in interventions just focussed on restoring the buildings for the sake of doing it. In case the community doesn't, it is our task to accompany the community to work on a management plan that can be implemented after we leave.

Regarding the interaction between foreigners and locals when it comes to field schools or volunteers, our case is very similar to that reported by Junko: locals feel very proud when foreign people come and appreciate their heritage and ask them about farming. They feel really proud, it's a good interaction.

Ángel (MD)

In countries as Peru, where there is a strong imbalance between urban and rural areas, with associated historical burdens of socio-economic inequalities and cultural prejudices, it is likely that any training or educational initiative, aimed at less favoured regions, will arise or have been gestated from Lima or some other leading city. During the 1990s, a variety of State actions were implemented with support from Peruvian and foreign non-governmental agencies, including international cooperation agencies. Without detracting from the purposes and efforts deployed, almost all the aforementioned entities devoted themselves to assistance that, due to the overwhelming issues of the time, prioritised food, basic infrastructure and health. For this reason, the vision of local development ran in the short term and was rather sectorial. As opposed to this, in the final stretch of the 20th century third-sector bodies have begun working in educational projects. Then, in some way, under the good pretext of capacity building, the communities and their territories were observed from a comprehensive perspective.

But observing is not the same as understanding, and the aspirations, needs and interests of the beneficiary communities still have to be fully acknowledged. However, the daily relationships established between inhabitants and 'development enthusiasts' tend to be open and active, and this is a good point to build

upon. The task would involve transforming outsiders into 'committed developers of the territory', with proactive and transversal attitudes and skills.
Until now, rural populations have sensed that those training ventures will last as long as there are funded; the entities that promote new knowledge and innovative paradigms tend to go bankrupt sooner rather than later and to be completely disconnected from the local culture and politics. Ego, pretension, and personal vanity have no place in the exercise of development of peripheral spaces, and if this is the case, the practitioners involved have to quickly connect with the communities' essence and idiosyncrasies. In my personal experience – shared with many comrades – the spirit of cooperation has prevailed. However, set-up initiatives were often discontinued due, among other reasons, to these territories' historical and structural limitations in economic and possibilities, which can hardly be overcome. In Peru, the need for a harmonious and effective coexistence between cooperators and beneficiaries is recently being understood, and reciprocity is now agreed as a beneficial element for local development.

Carmen (Tr)

I absolutely agree with the sentence: "the 'beauty' of a building [is] what an outsider who does not use the building sees", and I would add: "luckily outsiders still look at the others' buildings". Otherwise, even more cultural heritage would have disappeared – here, there, and everywhere. The unpleasant situations that have been mentioned about expelled inhabitants should be avoided with local policies that encourage locals to stay and maintain their buildings.
Terrachidia's experience in rural southern Morocco has always been positive but the beginning of our project, in 2012, wasn't easy. That was something expected because locals didn't know us at all and the only reference they had about us was a common friend. Our proposal was to 'swap the expected roles' and make them teach us about their cultural heritage and, specifically, their built heritage. All were quite suspicious about the work we asked them to do and couldn't believe that we were not paid. During the workshops, experts in traditional building techniques became 'masters' and both local young men and foreigners learnt from them. Words like "beauty", "heritage" and "preservation" were difficult to understand for them, and they only referred to the functional reasons of architecture. At the end, our interest and their purpose brought fruitful opportunities forward. After eight years working with them, things are clearer and both sides understand and respect the other's expectations. At present, fortunately, our relationship is much stronger that it was at the beginning and even in a difficult situation as the one we are having with Covid-19, confidence allows us to go forward with our projects thanks to online working and communication media.

Ever Mamani[11]

Purchasing power in the communities is increasing and is often reflected in more modern constructions: people mix up poverty with tradition and improvement with modern constructions. What was the biggest challenge you faced in dealing with the communities, during the development of your projects?

[11] Senior Master Restorer of Fundación Altiplano.

Carmen (Tr)

At the beginning the biggest challenge was to gain the trust of the locals, to make them understand that we were in good faith, that we did not want to speculate, that we had a certain interest in their culture and architecture, and that we wanted to learn how to build their way, through the cooperation with them. I don't want to give a utopian or ideal image, but in reality, it wasn't a great challenge: once the first phase was over, it was really easy – you just have to show what you do, that you do it with passion, that you are professionals and that you want to work. At the most, sometimes there were communication problems, or problems of mutual misunderstanding.

Americo (Pl)

To answer this question, I would start by describing some aspects of our context. First, we work in an area defined as depressed, with a decreasing population. In addition, we work jointly and coexist with the Associação para o Estudo e Proteção do Gado Asinino (AEPGA). Our co-presence on the ground works very well in many ways. AEPGA has greater proximity to animal breeders and owners, being in contact with them daily. Their efforts in community relations also work well for us, who, associated with them, are not seen as outsiders. Sometimes the local population even confuses the two associations, or they do not know that we are two separate entities – this has its advantages and disadvantages. Unfortunately, or fortunately, most of the people who have worked or work in both associations are from outside the region, coming from other parts of Portugal or even from other countries. This implies that the local population sees us as outsider groups.

Palombar is mainly concerned with observing nature in different aspects, depending on which the population's perception of us changes. When, for example, we talk about wolves, the population does not want to be involved in our work and we are asked to leave. When we deal with heritage, on the other hand, the attitude is more cooperative.

Another aspect to consider is the evolution of the relationship with the community during our 21 years. Palombar began as an association of dovecote owners, so inevitably the emphasis was mainly on dovecotes. Most of the people who were there in the beginning are no longer part of the association. The association was born as a continuation of the establishment of the Douro International Natural Park (PNDI) in 1998, but has always been independent of it. The negative perception of the population towards the Park, linked to the imposition of rules with direct impacts on the inhabitants, influenced their feeling towards the association and our work. Various events testify these problems – for example I was the only one in my village (where there are between twenty and thirty dovecotes) to have accepted to join a rehabilitation programme carried out before the association was born. In fact, the perception was that they would 'steal' the dovecotes.

Initially, the population showed a lot of distrust and mistrust towards us, although they appreciated our work. Over the years, the relationship with the population has gradually evolved, leading to a paradigm shift. Currently our work of dovecote restoration is totally accepted, and people want it. Today we receive requests from owners who want to rebuild their dovecotes on a regular basis, so much so that we are unable to respond to all these requests since funding is insufficient. Most

of the heritage in the region is in fact privately owned, only the government buildings are public property. Another difficulty we are having is at the financing level: sometimes people are a bit opportunistic, they want to recover for free. In relation to stone walls, the perspective is good, people like them. We try in many cases to involve local masons in the construction, but the people are not very cooperative: they would rebuild them with concrete and feel that we are the ones who know how to do it without it.
The community perceives that our presence has a positive economic impact: because it both helps to attract visitors to the area – who in turn rent houses, spend, and consume – and to create job opportunities. In the villages where we organise the workshops more frequently, there is an appreciation, and subsequent nostalgia, for the convivial time created by our meetings: in fact, the work camps function as a kind of approaching, bringing for two weeks movement to places where otherwise there would not be much going on. In fact, we also offer activities with local musicians, festivals, and dinners that bring volunteers and the villagers together... Not all people come, but we always try to involve them. All these things, over the years, are slowly changing people's perceptions.

Kiichiro (MG)

I moved to Noto Peninsula to create my own lifestyle in a small village, far away from big cities and modernisation. I believed that this was a great place to live, full of resources – both natural resources such as trees and the traditional wisdom of *satoyama*, that is based on the harmony between human life and the surrounding nature. Many people from the rural areas move to the big cities, to make a living or get a higher education. They don't understand why people, like me, want to go the opposite direction. It is hard to explain, and it takes lot of time.
Living in a small village, I noticed that there are so many layers – village section; village, small town; town; small city; big city. Sometimes, those who live in big cities feel a sense of superiority over villagers. In Japan, marginal areas run the risk of emptying out. After WWII many people from big cities tried to prevent this, travelling all around Japan and collecting research materials from rural areas. However, this mono-directional relationship of giving and receiving helped strengthening the sense of superiority, and some researchers acted as a kind of aristocrats. I think is important to do field surveys. They help people from the cities to understand the rural world, and villagers are always kind and welcome them, but sometimes the outsiders made surveys just for their own purposes. Researchers should respect local people, build a relationship with them, and avoid nuisance during field surveys, as it was pointed out by the great Japanese anthropologist, Miyamoto Tsuneichi (Miyamoto 1983) and his disciple, Ankei Yuji (Miyamoto 2007; Miyamoto and Ankei 2008). The product of the research should be shared with locals, and subtle variations within a territory should be understood. In Japan not only rural areas, but also big cities are facing serious economy, safety, and environmental problems, so I think that arrogant help from outside should rather be directed towards the place where one lives, to solve local problems.
I'm now living in a small community. I think that to work on the rehabilitation of traditional heritage it is very important to live or be at the site. After twenty years, I'm still regarded as a stranger or as a kind of invasive species to the local

community. On the other hand, visitors see me as one of the locals. I think both are true and this teaches me that my role is to create a good connection between locals and visitors, acting so that exchange can happen. There is much positive communication between local people, scientists, and visitors. I think that the life-size scale and the shared space and time are very relevant.

Elena (ARF)

I would just like to share my impression from the fieldwork on the phenomenon of perception. When we first came to Gostuša, we were recording everything because we were fascinated by how many buildings were well preserved. People were suspicious about what we were doing, did it have to do with taxes? Why were we there? Why did you survey my house? They had thousands of questions, and they didn't even want to let us record their properties and their houses. After we spent some time there, they changed their opinion in a way. When you start doing research you have to be mindful of the people's perception of your work.

Eltjana (GO2)

Building trust within a community is essential for successful collaboration and project implementation. This process cannot be rushed; it requires patience and consistency over time. If you approach community members with honesty and transparency, and they recognize that you are genuinely working toward a common goal, they are more likely to support your efforts. Once they see your commitment, they can become some of your most valuable allies.
Through ongoing engagement and support, we aim to empower them to take ownership of their heritage, ensuring that it is cherished and maintained for years to come.

Ionas (Bl)

As you can imagine, at the beginning of a project there is always a certain reluctance on the side of the locals, but again, when a work is completed there is always a deeper relationship, or at least with a good part of the local community. It takes time. I think this is the key point – it takes time to build trust. For us, as an itinerant group, this also presents a challenge, because we do want to travel; we want to keep on discovering different places. And to a certain extent, travelling means always starting from scratch. With each new journey, new people and new communities come along, new relationships that need to be built. One thing we have learned so far, however, is that building a 'real thing' is very different from just going there for a few days to organise some kind of cultural or educational activity. And as we go on, the fact that our group has a record of previously implemented projects plays a big role in gaining a community's trust; it serves as a proof of a certain commitment to delivering something concrete and tangible – something that is not always easy to attain; indeed, it is always laborious and challenging.

Moreover, the way you engage in dialogue with locals before, during and after the project is also important. I mean that how a project is formulated, implemented and received, has a lot to do with how much you listen, how much you include people in different stages and aspects of the project. Overall, we try to involve local communities in as many aspects as possible. A first step we often take is

inviting locals to co-organise communal feasts, in which local food (as well as local habits, ideas and concerns) may be shared with our team and with workshop participants. Such activities help in cultivating a sense of intimacy that allows for further discussion to unfold. To be sure, one needs to be careful not to limit community engagement to feasts with food and dance, but rather use such activities as beginnings to involve local communities in a project in meaningful and empowering ways. And of course, it is a challenge to weave such different dimensions together, to open discussions with local communities that may not be easy to manage; to really listen to what they want, what they expect, what they fear, what they hope. This always implies some friction, it's not easy, it takes time. Thus it's also important to remember that some things cannot be resolved instantly. They will only be resolved – if they will be resolved – along the way.

During these years we also found out how important it is not to idealise local communities; to accept that these communities too, are filled with tensions and contradictions. The way a community understands its heritage or what it wants to 'do with it' is not the same for all of its members. Parts of the community will embrace the project, or come closer to see what's it about; others will be sceptical no matter what. But in any event, there are profound exchanges taking place within such encounters. There are many nuances in such processes, and there are many interesting things that come up once time is allowed to come in.

Regarding a community's responsibility, or the extent to which local communities take on what we initiate or propose: in one of our previous projects – not the ones mentioned in my presentation – just a few weeks after Boulouki's work was done, some of the local residents started to discover pieces of old cobbled paths that had been buried and lost, in other parts of the settlement. In a sense, our project had managed to effectively inform the local community's understanding of its heritage, and encourage them to take it into their own hands.

Eltjana (GO2)

Our organisation engages extensively with rural local communities, which often exhibit a strong sense of homogeneity and connection among their members. This close-knit nature can present both advantages and challenges.
On the positive side, the strong bonds within these communities allow us to integrate quickly into their social fabric. This facilitates relationship-building, enabling us to persuade them of the honesty of our goals and achieve tangible results in a relatively short time.
Moreover, there is often a sense of inferiority among rural communities when compared to urban ones. Many rural residents perceive themselves as underdeveloped, which can affect their self-esteem and willingness to engage with external initiatives. However, within these communities lies a wealth of valuable assets, including rich cultural heritage, oral histories, and a small-scale circular economy rooted in breeding, agriculture, and traditional building practices.
From our perspective, it is crucial to help these communities recognise and take pride in their unique cultural heritage and resources.

5.2

REHABILITATION OF TRADITIONAL HERITAGE



The social role of technology



Andrea Bocco

The requalification of the built heritage might be understood as a technical issue, in fact a very high level of skill is needed in order to intervene in an aware way on heritage buildings: they deserve respect. Many times, it happens to see mal-adjusted technologies which are not appropriate to heritage buildings.

There is some kind of bias against traditional technologies in certain regulations, and sometimes traditional technology smacks of poverty or backwardness. It is crucial to promote the qualities of these technologies to continue these traditions in a very aware and contemporary way. According to me this is just one side of the coin.
The other is that those people who are very skilled and take on themselves this challenge to promote the continuation of traditional technologies may also develop a very high sensitivity in terms of local populations' needs, in terms of working together with them to build a future for the local society and economy.

Most of the foundations, associations, groups who convened to our seminars happen to work – and not by chance – in marginal areas (sometimes mountain areas, sometimes difficult access areas), which in some way help to preserve the physical integrity of heritage, but also imply difficult living conditions in comparison with urban, flatland areas, and this leads to phenomena such as ageing, depopulation, impoverishment. The challenge here is to find people who take care both of the physical heritage (the buildings, stonewalls, terraced landscapes...) and the people and their livelihood. To preserve a building without the inhabitants – without those who don't only make use of it, but also give meaning to it – is not particularly remarkable.

5.2.1 Conception and perception of heritage

Redina

Many of you are working in contexts different from where you have lived and been trained; some have even settled in these local communities since long, and they became part of them. But not always what is considered heritage in theoretical frameworks and particularly in the western conception, is relevant for the local population. Did you experience such a difference?
What approach did you take to understand this difference and integrate the two conceptions? In the training processes you carry out, especially with out-comers like volunteers and students, what approach did you take to narrate both the values that we conventionally recognise as 'universal', and the local narrative together with the values which come with it, that are relevant to communities?

Andrea L.

I am an architectural historian, so of course I'm interested in building techniques and practice, but I am especially interested in the processes of 'heritagisation'. The social, political, ideological, or religious reasons that make 'heritage' some of the objects and the knowledge we receive form the past. We choose something and make it heritage. I will therefore pose a couple of questions that cut across the various contributions. I start from a lexical issue connected with the very title of this series of seminars. Each of the speakers interpreted in a personal way the concept of 'tradition' and 'traditional': different duration, different depth, different periodisation. I suppose that behind the technical choices made by every team, there are particular meanings of the concept of 'tradition'. When we compare this concept of traditional with the times of history, I wonder – when did a knowledge, an experience or a common practice become traditional? Which is the relationship between tradition – meant as vernacular, popular, spontaneous – and history – usually linked to monuments, power, authority? Dealing with processes of 'heritagisation', how can scholars study the phenomenon of the 'perception' of heritage? the way people feel about their built environment? How do scholars manage to connect the 'things' – the buildings, the places, the sites – with their cultural 'values', which make these 'things' and places meaningful for a community?

Chiara (SBAP)

History and knowledge are fact, while tradition is sometimes perception. Especially in Italy, but this would be true everywhere else, we are immersed in heritage. I mean that we are surrounded by monuments and also by traditions. More and more we consider tradition as a part of heritage. Maybe less defined and clearly understood as such, but nevertheless part of cultural heritage. The perception of what surrounds us and the merge between intangible tradition and tangible monuments is becoming more and more evident. In this context, culture is one of the criteria to establish what to preserve thoroughly, without introducing any modification, and what to preserve introducing some amount of innovation.
What I can report from the experience of the School of specialisation is that the less of knowledge and culture we have and the less we consider the heritage we have around. The question of identity is absolutely prominent. Probably heritage,

tradition and identity are strongly connected with each other in, and are specific to, a given geographic and social context. When the connection between heritage and context is lost for any reason, identity is also lost, and we do not perceive the quality of the spaces in which we live anymore. When we lose such perception we also lose our patrimony, a synonym of heritage.
The turning point is when we start considering that what we have around is extraordinary and that everything we destroy of it makes our self-consciousness weaken.

Kiichiro (MG)

I'm not an historian but I'm very interested in the word tradition. Based on my perception, 'history' or 'knowledge' are very objective words; 'tradition' is a subjective word. Depending on the person, the definition of tradition is slightly different, and it is hard to tell what is traditional and what is not.
One reason I am interested in tradition is that natural materials like wood, stone, and grass are often used in traditional building technology. Using natural materials, not only skilled craftspeople, but also volunteers can join and work together. I'm interested in doing research on architecture not only through theory and head but using the hands and body. I think that traditional things give me the chance to do that.
I also think it is important to understand the wide variety of values and ways of thinking. There are differences not only between West and East, but also within Japan between villages, towns and big cities, and between farming villages and fishing villages. Even within our village, there are differences between the larger section facing the main street and marginal smaller sections.
I think we do not need to overcome the differences. All we need is to make the differences explicit and find out how to make them coexist. Even better if we enjoy the differences, which can teach us diverse ways of thinking.
A very effective way to make people with different ideas and backgrounds communicate and exchange points of view is to create a situation where they perform together some simple action, such as walking or eating. Soon, they will start talking and trying to know each other.
The word "biodiversity" is now very common, not only the field of biology and ecology. I think the diversity of human beings and viewpoints is even more fundamental. Also, it is better not to have a fixed identity, but to accept and cultivate the presence of many different elements within oneself.

Ángel (MD)

It is very important to consider the situation of each territory: for example, the most important city in southern Peru, Arequipa, is 160 km from the Colca. Arequipa is located at 2300 m above sea level. To get to the Colca, you have to overcome altitudes of 5000 m and descend to 3600 m. The Peruvians, or even the population of Arequipa, do not necessarily know rural places like the Colca. Neither architecture students nor architecture graduates have familiarity with the problems of rural areas.
I have been in contact with the people of the Colca Valley for more than twenty years, and I can confirm that they have their own narrative regarding not only the concept of heritage, but also the evaluation of what communities possess, which

does not necessarily coincide with what we have learned in our formal education or what we often believe from theoretical approaches. For this reason, trial and error processes have been present in almost all projects. In terms of self-criticism rather than criticism, we could say that there has been a space-time of mutual understanding.
Those of us who have lived longer and continue to share with new generations, should get even closer to the communities to try to share our sensitivity about heritage. It would be very presumptuous to think that we have the answers to their own aspirations. I don't think this has improved that much over time, and universities still do not equip their graduates with tools to tackle practical issues about landscape and heritage.
From occasions of debating and sharing like this, I expect to gain a more universal understanding of heritage, but at the same time we all should develop a sensitivity to relate intimately to communities and be able to interpret their aspirations. No doubt, we need an education that does not neglect the academic knowledge, but it should also develop much more capacity to apply theoretical concepts to concrete issues regarding the heritage, which emerge from the field.

Pimpim (THF)

In many of our projects it was never case of discussing about this. We were preserving the heritage, they wanted to preserve something that was part of their daily life. The heritage we are talking about is often the continuity of the way we grow up, or the context where we grow up, or the things that surround us, and is about keeping past things living on and on. In some projects we didn't talk much about heritage. For example, in the case of Tibet, it was more about identity.
Also in Mongolia our work was not about heritage, it was just ensuring the continuity of their tradition, of their life. Since the monastery had been closed and turned into an army camp, eight years had passed without religious ceremonies, and people wanted to pray for their beloved ones who had passed away.
So, the heritage we were preserving was a living heritage, their day-to-day life.
Many terms we use in our work, are often misused: for example developers and tourist operators are talking about heritage and preservation. The developers because if they talk about sustainability, about organic, about heritage, they appear to be good, and that they align with current global goals, but in fact they betray the real nature of these principles and giving a different meaning to them. There is so much misuse of the words that sometimes we don't know which word to use to avoid falling in *clichés*. If we are trying to save 15th century buildings and somebody else wants to tear them down, the fact that both use the same terminology is confusing.
About the perception of culture, values, and modernisation: people adapt some alien and modern things to their new needs, but at the same time they can stay very strongly attached to their traditions. What is convenient and good, people take it.
I believe that cultural values and heritage are a continuity of things that you receive from your grand-grand-grandparents. On these values and these things, you build up the continuity of the future cultural heritage.

Yutaka (THF)

Now I live in Ladakh. Even in this small area with a small population, there is a great diversity of cultures and religions which coexist: Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu; different ethnic groups including several from outside the Himalayas or Tibet, from the Pakistan side, but also from Kashmir. The totality is created in this way. All communities brought some inputs, and their diversity became the tradition of the local community. In addition, everything evolves in continuity: in our modern time, every influence is gathered in a very fast way. However, people still need some time to digest before something good becomes part of their cultural tradition.
Culture is composed of layers. You don't always know when something became traditional, it is a continuous process.
Even Muslim or Buddhist communities, that are very jealous of their different backgrounds, share lot of things with each other, especially during festivities, like new year, Ramadan, or the Losar festival – a kind of Ladakhi and Tibetan new year. This sharing is based on respect of the other. The different traditions bind the community.

Carmen (Tr)

We went to work in Morocco also because in Spain it would have been impossible to start a similar path: on the one hand, only a few masters remain who are still skilled in these traditional techniques, on the other, regulations pose serious limitations to carrying out similar initiatives.
In Morocco, traditional construction techniques are still alive, and therefore the concept of heritage itself is different. When I opposed to the demolition of a portion of a wall 100 or 150 years old, the local population did not understand me, since it would have been possible to rebuild the wall with the same technique and the same material – wouldn't it be better to have a new one built exactly the same way? They explained to me that the concept of heritage as such, as we understand it, does not exist in Arabic, they have other definitions, which do not imply cultural identification. This is a question we have been discussing with the local population for a long time.
While we initially tried to give the students all the information we had, we later realised that it was more interesting to give them a few brushes of essential information and put them in contact with the local people. After which they would be left free in discovering the place, conducting some of the work and contributing to it with their own vision and way of doing things, even incorporating their previous experience into the project.

Marta (Tr)

I think that a very important point is to maintain the local identity because every place has a specific way of building and if we lose that we cannot improve and keep the cultural heritage alive. However, many times, people think that traditional constructions are the constructions of the poor.
We work in the south of Morocco where since centuries people live in very closed settlements which are adapted to the hard climate (it can be as hot as 50°C in summer). It's a specific urbanisation with specific dwellings and ways of building.

Many years ago, new forms of urbanisation and new materials came in. People lost their identity and their life conditions worsened. Concrete houses are not better, because concrete is not adapted to the land and the climate.

Elena (ARF)

When we as experts plan our work we have to think about people living in this built heritage, interacting and spending time with them to understand what this heritage actually represents for them.
This area was abandoned in the Seventies due to the industrialisation process. Those who remain there live in a poor condition: they don't have roads and other basic services. Until the end, they could not understand why we were there and why we really wanted to work on the houses in their villages.
After many years and many interactions with locals we still find that those stones used for roofing, that we consider remarkable, for them are a burden they want to remove and replace with some lighter material.

Américo (Pl)

At the beginning people were suspicious and didn't see dry-stone walls and buildings as heritage. They saw them as a burden and something difficult to maintain. Instead of collecting stones in the field, you might buy one thousand bricks and you would just have to stack them on top of the other to get a wall.
In the last twenty years that we have been working there, maybe because we did it and we promoted it – or maybe because of the tourism factor that attracts more visitors to the region – the locals' perception has changed. Now it's normal to keep building stone walls.
Regarding the tradition, and the perception of tradition: in my presentation, I used the word tradition with reference to different periods. Now that you have asked the question, I start questioning myself whether I was talking about houses that are from the 18th century, pigeon houses from the 10th, or techniques that are from the last fifty years.

Junko (DSW)

In the case of dry-stone retaining walls, the conflict of values is less pronounced. Older people seem to prefer concrete walls to dry-stone walls because they do not require maintenance. However, now that rural areas are becoming depopulated and the cost of concrete work cannot be repaid by farming, young people are beginning to prefer dry-stone walls because they can build them themselves.
Furthermore, the Dry-stone walling school illustrates the value of dry-stone walls from an environmental point of view, leading to an appreciation of this technique by those who have migrated to the countryside to start farming.

Cristian (FA)

I'm not an expert in anything, I just walk in community. We try to collaborate to help in the need of heritage conservation. We have discovered and learnt in these humble native communities a lot of things about conservation. Most of them have nothing to do with the academy. It is important not only to decolonise heritage, but maybe also to de-academise heritage.

We affirm a ‘naked’ vision of heritage – colonised heritage is too academic and boring, while heritage should be cultivated the same way one cultivates the land. Heritage with the feet sunk in the mud, that we must take care of for the future as a treasure.
The need of cultural conservation is a human need, as is the need of sustainability. The goal is making the treasure of the ancestral heritage available to the new generation, which understands conservation not only as necessary, but urgent and definitely practical, not theoretical.
Conservation should be economically sustainable: and please don’t talk to me about tourism which is proven to be totally unsustainable. The question is the vocation or the utility of the conserved asset. Capitalism is talking a lot about ‘sharing economy’. Maybe we who work in heritage conservation should begin to speaking about ‘conservative economy’. Yesterday Umberto Maturana died, he was a singular Chilean thinker. He said something very beautiful about conservation: “The most important thing in innovation is what you want to conserve” (Madurana n.d.). There is the key: the magnificent future of the small villages seems evident. At the village community scale, heritage means housing, food, education, recycling, technology, responsible living.
To work with heritage is to talk with the dead, and the dead are saying to us that in architectural schools you don’t find the needed, sensible approach to heritage.

Maurizio (AC)

Here in Ossola we have a Romanesque heritage – all buildings are made of stones, roofs are made of stones. What I see around me is the result of a ten centuries-long dialog between the population who lived here and the nature and resources around. I think that at one point of history something changed and we clearly realise that we are in a specific time when everything changes fast, and everything is new in a way. Many villages around me, that today we call historical heritage, only one hundred years ago were houses. This means something.

5.2.2 Sources and documentation

Andrea L.

I pose the problem of 'sources' and 'documentation'. I imagine that traditional techniques and knowledge have been transmitted as word of mouth from generation to generation. How is it possible, in the different case studies, to reconstruct the historical depth of the constructional solutions adopted? Are there (scholarly, academic, religious, or political) written sources that somehow reported about the tradition? Or that maybe misrepresented the tradition with ideological aims?

Américo (Pl)

We mainly use oral sources for the construction techniques because there are no records, at least in the region. There are publications about similar techniques from other regions, but not in our region.
The person I know who best masters traditional construction techniques is Nunu, the first president of the Association. He learnt many techniques from his father and grandfather, who were construction workers. We learnt a lot from him.
In addition, we often relied on people's oral accounts: we looked for people who were able to practise these techniques and recorded their stories. From these, we have tried to reconstruct the processes behind the techniques, to keep alive what we had been told.
We combine this oral knowledge with external knowledge gained from workshops and literature. For example, we work a lot with lime, on which there is a lot of information in literature, from how to apply it to durability.
About the uses of the traditional dovecotes, we have some record, especially from the church because they use to register everything. Some sources from the 15th-16th centuries mention rules on these. In the last fifty years, some anthropologists investigated these structures, their uses and the deep connection with the local culture.

Maurizio (AC)

We don’t have many documents to take information from. This is one of the reasons why we decided to ground our project in a village. The meaning of what we are doing is to find information from the houses and the walls.
I’m quite sure that this is the first point to try to do a good project in the future. We cannot approach a restoration project having less knowledge than people had in the past. We have to know buildings very well and grasp what was done in the past, and then we have to decide what to keep and what to change, and of course add all the new contemporary knowledge to continue history and to adapt houses to our style of life.

Marta (Tr)

People who are living in traditional houses know how to build them. We help them working with them to keep such knowledge alive, and maintain the local identity.

5.2.3 Technology transfer processes and innovations

Andrea L.

If we spend our time studying the history and designing the future, the risk is to leave the present to somebody not able to interpret the relation between past and future. We leave the present to immediate reactions and emotions. We are not able to envisage the future that we would like, we run the risk of projecting nostalgic feelings on a past that we don't know anymore, and we risk losing the present. This is the main field of commitment of everybody working about heritage, involving everyone with their historical, technical, economical knowledge. If we share our approach, we can organise something useful and interesting, and of course gather diverse perspectives. I appreciate very much the approach proposed by Cristian because the responsible living is one way to inhabit and cultivate the present. He said "cultivate heritage like land": every day we have to take care of our land and of our heritage. The risk now is to lose part of our memory, of our past, of our identities while we are reflecting about them. This is the real issue for both historians and designers.

Emiliano

I would like to ask a question that has to do with technology transfer processes. In most cases, the projects involve the employment of local labourers and experts with their traditional knowledge, which, combined with scientific experiences carried out in universities and research centres, produce an improvement or update of traditional techniques. In your experience, do innovative technological solutions emerge from the joint work of local actors and foreign participants, which can then be adapted to the local context?

Andrea B.

Another more specific side of the question: I was stroke by what Yutaka commented on the museum in Leh (THF 4.8): in that museum I saw that traditional technology is something you can play with. If you became totally one with a tradition, and tradition is not imposed by regulations, you can play with the materials and the building techniques and you can build a new thing which is not mimicking the past, yet is absolutely in tune with the past. Somebody said that tradition is "a continuous project which we associate with". It seems to me that in some cases you were able to associate so much that you became part of the flow. It is extremely stimulating to observe a tradition that is rooted in the past but points to the future.

Chiara (SBAP)

Traditional technical knowledge has been used for a long time and is the reflection of a community. Buildings are an adaptation to the specific conditions of the place where they rise. This becomes even more evident when we pass from the single building to the organisation of buildings in a settlement. The more a settlement is able to respond to the local conditions, the more it becomes an emblem of the ability of culture to adapt and make the best use of local resources. Those who visit places and do not just look at them as if they were a postcard, perceive very well this transmigration of cultural elements into architectural and settlement choices.

They therefore have a vision of the landscape mediated by the recognition of this adaptive response. Attentive observers perceive what is the fruit of that capacity to settle and adapt, and what is somehow dissonant. When I say dissonant, I do not imply uglier, but to some extent at odds with the local tradition.
Nowadays, we historians think in terms of "territorial cultural systems": identified not because of political borders, not even historical ones, but because of the spread of common cultural elements. Outcomers must somehow fit into these systems: they must understand them and adapt to the specificity of the territory.
Heritage is a matter of conservation, but there is a moment when conservation passes through innovation and courage. The moment when we must be brave, face the complexity and add something. Can the past in architecture and in landscape suggest solutions for the future? This is a question that the historians themselves are often facing. The answer is extremely complicated; it depends on the context. I think the motto “think globally and act locally”, can be a good way to answer. If we consider the past globally, probably we perceive a relentless transformation of everything. But it’s hard to apply this vision to a specific request at the local scale. We are normally requested to act in spaces where the micro-history and the local traditions are at the centre of the stage, not the global history. It’s a question of strabismus, to embrace the rhetoric image Andrea Bocco has used. A cross-eyed condition in which we have a general idea of big history, but we have much more knowledge of the peculiarities of the local historical context. And maybe we try to find solutions derived from such specific knowledge. Our experience is that if the solutions we suggest respect the local historical use of the landscapes and the natural sources, these will be accepted more easily by the population and embedded more easily in the context.

Yutaka (THF)

“Think globally, act locally”: our normal approach is act locally and find the way to adapt things from the global level, not just copy and paste them. I love vernacular architecture because it is the best reflection of traditional environment, knowledge and lifestyle of the people. Every people in every corner of the word live in a different context, environmentally and resource-wise. Communities use locally available material to assemble the best structures and create the best spaces, so to spend their life comfortably. This is reflected in the variety of vernacular architecture, that makes it so interesting for us.
I’m not against the modern and comfort – everybody desires it –, but I see that often things are just copied from the outside without really understanding them nor the context where they are imported. In this process it is important to act locally and adapt from the global level, allowing the time to digest. This is the way to continue local specificities in the future.

Maurizio (AC)

The relationship between heritage conservation and technological innovation is part of a wide-ranging and ever-changing scenario with sometimes opposing forces involved. It is not easy to determine how much investigation work done in collaboration with research centres, even when carried out on site, can be really transferred to the local context. However, looking at the last twenty years we can

appreciate a general and positive evolution in the approach to conservation and I believe that the work carried out by the Associazione Canova has contributed to a constructive debate. I would like to conclude with a personal consideration, which aims to approach what I consider the heart of the matter. I believe that where the aesthetic, cultural, economic, and historical 'value' of a construction is truly recognised, the best solutions and techniques will be adopted to conserve it properly. Communicating 'value' is, in short, the highest objective of our work.

Ángel (MD)

What concerns all of us, who are in permanent contact not only with communities but also with the public and private management of heritage, is not only the initiation, but the continuity of projects. I think this is where an imbalance is generated, which can cause a breakdown in their sustainability, and this has to do with technological innovation.
A coexistence of preservation and innovation is fundamental. It is important to advance on the path of the protection of local heritage; but it is also necessary to understand the demands of the population and how they can be interpreted in an intercultural dialogue. Paradoxically, this is not done necessarily by local actors, but by people like us who come to these places and try to understand what these demands are, and what the future possibilities might be.
Many projects of ours have succeeded in becoming seminal. There are periods when we benefit of important 'heritage investments' from some public or private entity, but these are followed by periods of drought, when it is difficult to implement further operations. In these times, when budgets are scarce, what can be done is to strongly appeal to inventiveness.

Junko (DSW)

I learnt the art of dry-stone walls from local elders. By adding the value of sustainability, I was able to give a modern meaning to the technique, which goes beyond tradition. As a result, the number of people wanting to learn dry-stone walling has increased. Our work has opened possibilities not only to preserve old walls but also to build new ones.

Edvin (FG)

We all face a challenge in the choice of materials in the recovery of heritage, especially at UNESCO sites. In my experience in Gjirokastra, we try to be as authentic as possible, but we cannot achieve 100% authenticity. Albania is developing, and we feel a lot of pressure from businesses and the government. In the initial stages of a project, we can try to adopt a sensible approach, but when in the later stages it goes into the hands of the government, we lose control over the authenticity of the materials. If the initiatives are private, there is also the haste to complete the work.

Hagino (MG)

We are always trying to learn from both traditional wisdom and scientific knowledge. I think that reconciling them would allow to take advantage of the most interesting points of both and provide understanding of the lifestyle and the richness of traditional *satoyama*.

5.2.4 Transmission (to young generations)

Emiliano

As a person in charge of the heritage policies in a large city, which has not, however, managed to consolidate a heritage education policy, I would like to know if you work with formal and/or informal education and valuation processes to overcome the negative perception of traditional techniques and their association with poverty and 'lack of development'. Have you partaken any educational processes with children, teenagers and young people who may be interested in the valorisation and conservation of this heritage and in the revaluation of traditional techniques and local identity, who may then receive technical training in this area?

Chiara (SBAP)

Those who act to safeguard the cultural heritage of a territory and its specific form of traditional culture must recognise that they are faced with a heritage and be trained to interact with that heritage. This is more evident if one tries to overcome the opposition between 'monuments' and 'lesser' heritage. What is lesser heritage? The building constructed of earth bricks? The building constructed the same way as the heritage monument but which is of a lesser value? The building not signed by an important architect? When we say lesser heritage, we basically mean diffuse heritage, which lives in relation to its specific context. The ability to recognise such lesser built heritage can be the result of education, and such education starts in childhood. This allows children (and the adults they will become) to perceive the local cultural specificity, and to identify heritage settlements and buildings. Recognition leads to a more respectful approach, that is more careful not to include disharmonious elements. This is not a crusade against reinforced concrete: in some cases, it is all very well; in other cases, however, the inclusion of unrelated elements leads to a loss of heritage specificity.

Maurizio (AC)

Educational activities have always played a fundamental role. The participation of many students from various Italian and foreign universities in the camps we organised has encouraged an important cultural exchange that has repeatedly highlighted the thread that links the problems of conserving the 'lesser' heritage in geographical areas very distant from each other. I believe that what we are doing is important for us and for the universities too, because every time we hosted students, I noticed a gap between the academy and the world outside. The experience we offer is typically ten days long and we do not expect to fill such gap, but at the end of each camp I see the face of the students and I am quite sure that they'll go back with some new tools in the backpack.

Junko (DSW)

Most of the students at the Tokyo Polytechnic University were born and raised in urban contexts – in Tokyo or near Tokyo, a megalopolis. They don't know anything about the country life. Having lived in the city, they never had the opportunity to perceive their physical limits, because they always use transport to move and have always found everything 'ready' in life. When working to build dry-stone

walls, however, one immediately feels fatigue; the students finally perceive the limits of their body and understand that humans are part of nature and are some kind of animals. After graduation, many of them will work for the government (ministries, etc.), local administrations, or enterprises that collaborate in territorial policies, but if they don't understand this point, the policies they carry out will be wrong. By recognising the limits of human capacity, perhaps it is possible to create a sustainable society. I think this is very important.
As for the interaction with the younger generation, I held workshops for teenagers; while with 7-12 year olds, I did workshops with scale models of dry-stone walls.

Carmen (Tr)

I think it is vital to have a university education related to practice, vernacular architecture, and alternative construction techniques. I graduated in architecture in 2000 and no course related to heritage or conservation was offered to me. Only afterwards, when I was deciding whether to become an architect, I started looking around and found courses, masters, and complementary training. Now these subjects are also covered in universities, and I think it is a great progress.

Beatriz (FA)

The Fundación Altiplano operates in a very large territory. We are recovering traditional techniques and developing sustainable development initiatives in thirty-four communities. Built heritage and traditional techniques are greatly devaluated now, which makes this process hard. We have put up a school-workshop (*escuela taller*) system that offers employment plus apprenticeship. The projects trigger the recovery of earth and stone works and are the occasion to recover intangible heritage; stories on built heritage are being collected. But it is very difficult for this to continue over time: political will is also needed; perhaps thanks to a new emerging paradigm the revaluation of heritage will progress a bit. Through our work to recover the trades in the Arica y Parinacota region, a strong exchange of knowledge has been generated. The local population is being trained, revaluing techniques that they had heard about, and which had been lost. For instance, in a town 4,000 metres above sea level, we recovered a way of building ceilings with earth and straw, called *caruna*, which the workers remembered being used by their grandparents.

Kiichiro (MG)

We have set up education programs in the elementary school of our village together with local elderly people who transmit traditional knowledge to the younger generation. We should learn much more from the old people as long as they are alive. Most children in our small village will move to big cities after completing the high school to study at some university or start working. And many of the grown-up villagers have an inferiority complex towards the residents of large cities. This is why we think it is very important to teach local children the character and the traditions of the village. Even though they will move away in the future, we hope all children will have knowledge of and feel pride about the place where they grew. I think this kind of educational activities could fit in many places, and it is very important to transmit the local identity to the children. Also, it is very significant that older and younger generations work together.

5.3

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT



'Heritage' and 'local development' as contested concepts



Francesca Governa

My perspective is somewhat eccentric due to both my disciplinary and research background. I hope that examining the connections between heritage and local development from a different point of view will add value to the discussion.
I would like to highlight three main points, beginning with some doubts I have concerning the two keywords at the centre of this seminar: “heritage” and “local development”.

Let’s begin with the notion of heritage, particularly traditional, vernacular, or lesser heritage. Rather than approaching heritage from a historical and architectonical standpoint, I’d like to examine it from a spatial/geographical point of view.
I think we need to question the meaning of heritage.
Heritage can be defined in many ways – as material or immaterial, as an object, a process, a perspective, an experience, and perhaps in other forms. From a spatial and geographical viewpoint, questioning the concept of heritage requires, at the very least, acknowledging its entanglement within multiple times and spaces. Heritage intersects with diverse, sometimes conflicting policies, projects, uses, and expectations – whether private or public, individual or collective, local or supralocal.
Heritage can, and perhaps must - be framed as a contested concept. It is not sure and simple. It is complex and uncertain; it always involves power relations across various spatial scales and within each spatial scale.
I’ll try to be a little clearer referring to some case studies presented by Doreen Massey in her works. Massey was a brilliant geographer from the Open University in the UK. In a book titled A Place in the World? Place, Culture and Globalisation (1995), she scrutinised heritage definition and strategies in various locations – the English countryside, and some regions of Honduras. She highlighted that inhabitants and institutions ascribe to heritage questioning the meaning of “tradition”. What is considered traditional and what is not? As well which is the meaning “local”, who counts as local and who does not, and the meaning of “locality”, where, in fact, is the locality.
Massey argued that the idea of “Englishness” in the English countryside is a contemporary construction, one that contrasts industrialization with a so-called “tradition” rooted in an idyllic past, a past that likely never existed, especially for those who worked there. What Massey highlighted is the importance to dig into the past, not only for historical understandings but particularly to uncover clashes, changes, shortcomings and conflicts. In her analysis of some indigenous communities in Honduras, Massey explored the conflictual negotiation over what constitutes

heritage and who has the authority and the right to define what is traditional and what is not, what is heritage and what is not.
To address, or at least make sense of, the contested and uncertain definition of heritage, Massey introduced the phrase "global sense of places" – that may initially seem a kind of paradox.
Place is normally considered as a synonym of "local", so why should one introduce a global perspective? Massey explained that what appears as local today, is actually part of long processes of contaminations, interactions and exchanges, flows of people, knowledge, money, extending far beyond conventional notions of local and locality.
This raised a central issue in geography, and beyond: the question of boundaries. Where is the locality? Where does a place truly begin and end?
The concept of a "global sense of place" suggests viewing local boundaries not as closed and fixed, but open and dynamic. This perspective challenges static understandings of place and space, promoting a relational approach that encourages connections with the outside, both in theoretical and practical terms. This shift is also important from a political point of view. By questioning conventional notions of local identity, the "global sense of place" emphasizes that the local (and its identity) is, and has always been, the product of interaction and exchange, rather than closure and exclusion.

The second point – the meaning of "local development" – is too broad to be discussed in detail here. I will therefore focus on the economic dimension of local development and the role heritage plays in local development processes and strategies. Heritage encompasses multiple economic dimensions and plays significant role in local development policies, projects, and plans. Angelo Pichierri, an Italian economic sociologist, in his book La regolazione dei sistemi locali (2002) addressed local development from an economic perspective. He described the relationship between heritage and local development as ambiguous, noting that heritage is expected to fulfil too many roles in local development policies. According to him, heritage is normally treated as a commercial activity, a location for businesses, a contributor to environmental quality, a pillar of local identity, a constituent of place promotion and branding, and a catalyst in regeneration policies. Perhaps too much. This extensive list invites reflection, and I believe that grounding our understanding in practical experiences can help us better frame the complex relationship between heritage and local development.

My final point serves as a recap of the previous ones. About six years ago, I conducted research aimed at understanding and improving local development processes in some Lombardia's mountain areas, focusing on the most fragile regions rather than on tourist hotspots (Governa, 2008).
Indeed, during that research, I felt some discomfort with how heritage was framed in local policies. In short, local plans and projects too often treat traditional heritage just as a resource for tourism, with tourism itself positioned as a catch-all solution to various issues.

However, I have serious reservations about this 'tourism rush,' stemming from several concerns. Tourism is a highly competitive sector and can often be unsustainable. It risks eroding the unique qualities of places and their heritage.
I believe that approaching heritage as a contested concept can open pathways to explore new approaches.
Tourism and other similar one-size-fits-all solutions seem, to me, overly simplistic and insufficient to address present political and environmental challenges.
The very concept of local development implies that multiple forms of development are possible. In my research experience, I observed that the complexity inherent in local development is often oversimplified, with a single pathway promoted—one heavily centered on tourism. Of course, tourism takes many forms, but we must remain cautious of this prevailing trend. It is a risk we must be aware of.
For those working in marginal areas, it's essential to understand the needs of local inhabitants, which include earning an income, and sustaining a viable livelihood. A functioning economy is essential, yet I view economy not as an abstract concept or as financial flows, but as a practical means of using heritage to connect the habitability of a place with economic opportunity. An economy that is not distant or detached but deeply embedded in the fabric of society itself.

5.3.1 Local development processes and results

Andrea B.

I would like to see if, besides tourism – which is more or less always present as an ingredient of the local development recipe –, there are other activities igniting local development processes, and generating income for the local community from the local community itself, therefore contributing to a circular local economy.

Emiliano

Are there experiences where technology transfer has allowed the development of new production activities, livelihood tools for the local population, or small enterprises?

Martina

Did the processes implemented – based on the conscious revival and transmission of traditional techniques – have in turn a positive influence on issues linked to local socio-economic dynamics?
Did they increase the sense of belonging and pride in traditions and settlements?
Did you perceive any changes, regarding for example the demographic trends, or the willingness of the population in collaborating with you in the recovery of heritage? Did you notice bottom-up processes of heritage conservation and maintenance?
What was your impact?

Chiara (SBAP)

More than change I would speak of impact as long as the School of specialisation is concerned. In our so-called ateliers – we stay for a week in a certain area and work together with the local population, associations and cultural organisations – we could appreciate a growth in the population's consciousness about the values of the territory and the heritage.
Our experience has been extremely positive along the years.
At the beginning there is a sort of suspicion – why is the Politecnico coming, what do they want to do here? Do they desire that our habits change? Are they biased against the area where we live? – Extremely quickly, this sort of suspicion changes into the idea that we can do something together.
Obviously this attains the cultural sphere much more than practical interventions, because as a school we cannot build or restore. But the exchange of information became quite quickly a sort of leitmotiv of the week spent on the field.
Decade after decade – the School has been in operation for forty continuous years now – our links with different local communities became stronger. Nowadays we can say that we are quite recognised as subjects who interpret territories and suggest possible forms of understanding the local heritage.
In Italy and Europe in general, even lesser heritage presents considerable intricacies: even in the most remote chapel there may be stuccoes, complex masonry, stone coming from local quarries that you need to put back in operation if you are to use again that very kind of stone in restoration works, and you would also need to find workers skilled in that very way of building if you want to rebuild with the same material.

Over the years, our School has published manuals of good practice: instructions for interventions close in conception to that of the original buildings. The basis of these instructions was always a deep knowledge, grounded on very refined preliminary studies. We are very proud of these preliminary studies, which experience has shown can give rise to compatible instructions, inspired by a principle of mediation. Indeed, the cost of reopening a historic quarry is exorbitant; the same applies to restoring certain stuccoes, because good labour is not enough, you need specialised craftspeople.
Listening to very different experiences presented in this series of seminars, we realise that in different forms and contexts, we are facing the same problems: first of all, there is a need for awareness, for knowledge of the traditional constructions which together make up the heritage to which we are referring; only on the basis of such an awareness is it possible to propose interventions, in continuity with the local tradition or even breaking away from it – this should not scare us. From our studies and experiments it emerged that the worst damage is done, as Oscar Wilde said, with the best of intentions, but without sufficient knowledge.

Pimpim (THF)

I don't know about Europe, but I assume that in the last decades a lot of change happened there. In our side of the world, in the last ten or twenty years things have been changing quite a lot. Especially in places that were not much developed. There are places where I worked in the past and I can't recognise anymore because they were transformed into cities. There is a lot of development here and it's going fast. The whole society is becoming more money oriented than traditional culture oriented. I also see lot of very fast change in Ladakh, like the new powerful development plans that might affect all communities and the ways in which they live. The change we witnessed in the last twenty years is absolutely unprecedented and very frightening, and sometimes you feel hopeless. We are scared not because of change per se, but because we don't have enough time to reflect on the new information and the new things. And sometimes the reaction is a disaster, especially for heritage and landscape.

Yutaka (THF)

Development and modernisation can burst suddenly, without allowing the time to digest them.
But I see also their positive side for a good future. For example, many of the young generation go to India to get a degree. Due to the pandemic, many of these young people are returning. These Ladakhis who have been exposed to the outside and have returned, start seeing the value of their own traditions and culture. During the time they were away, they adapted to the outside conditions; then they came back importing new things, but at the same time they became aware of the local heritage. They don't see it anymore just as something old, something that nobody wants. They show interest in it.
Some of the houses we restored in the old town are not inhabited by the original family anymore: they have been rented to local young people who use them as gathering places, cafés or similar functions which were imported from outside.

Elena (ARF)

A lot of things changed since we started.
We gave the inhabitants a different perception of their heritage. We showed them some values that they were not aware of, and they understood in a different way what is important in their environment. However, they are still fighting their battle n a daily basis. I don't think that their life changed much because of our projects.
For me as an architect and restorer, the most important thing is that we record the maximum amount of the local built heritage. We have now built up a rich documentation that can be used for other projects or any other purpose in the future. The first step in preservation is documentation.
The church was in such a bad state that for sure it would now be a ruin if we did not rehabilitate it. Thanks to our project, people were able to enter the church and use it after more than thirty years of neglect.
The most important change is that the local district government started to fund heritage projects: after our project they understood that rehabilitation can be sustainable, that heritage is something important and that they should pay more attention. Since then, we had more than ten projects going on, some of which are completed. This changed the people's point of view on the importance of heritage.

Américo (Pl)

About the positive side of change, we have seen an increase of the demand for traditional techniques, and we receive a lot of requests for help in restoring houses and dovecotes from private owners. They want to restore their structures and look for financial support and technical advice.
The former president of our Association founded a company for eco-construction, called "Green-eco construction". It has been so successful that he has no time left. There is a lack of people able to build houses with the traditional techniques.
Since I came there six years ago things have changed at least regarding the dry-stone walls: when I arrived people were building dry-stone walls but they completed them with a coat of cement. I think that this has decreased.
Local people started to see our organisation as a benefit for the region: if we stopped it would be bad for the region.

Maurizio (AC)

I like to call this period of history 'cultural tsunami', and I think that we are now at the end of this process. In our place, the old generation is not there anymore, and the new generation has different views about our historical heritage.
I am moderately optimistic about the future because year after year I see more people exploring the idea of living in the countryside and trying to restore the old houses. Even last year with the pandemic many people contacted us to restore houses and have a new life outside of the town.

Marta (Tr)

We have been working in Morocco for ten years now.
When we arrived, local people and communities only recognised the big monuments as cultural heritage. They did not believe that traditional constructions were also heritage, that deserved to be preserved and lived in.

We work with the inhabitants; our labourers are always local. They teach the young people how to keep alive the traditional construction techniques. I think that they believe that this is a way to conserve the value of heritage.
Last year signed an agreement with the local municipality to establish a school of construction for the youth.
Some years ago, local people thought tourism was the only perspective, but now, with covid-19, they've seen that tourism is broken, and it does not ensure a livelihood.

Beatriz (FA)

After many years spent with the Andean communities there have been so many positive changes that I just mention them: creation of new opportunities; heritage and identity put in value; the stimulus for a responsible tourism given.
Obviously, we cannot focus on the issue of recovering traditional techniques only, but it certainly helps development. In Tacora, some of the artisans we trained in the restoration project's school-workshop have set up their own construction company, called Pachacuti, continuing the work passed on to them and generating development. The same happened in San Pedro de Atacama.
These are the things we must try to make happen. But to make them happen and be sustainable over time – which means, among other things, not dependent on an institution such as the Fundación Altiplano –, we need to work on education and job creation.

Cristian (FA)

We are working on a report on the development of Fundación Altiplano and the results it has obtained. We are trying to provide evidence of the sustainability of conservation work.
I recently made a research on the economic sustainability of six world heritage cities. I was surprised that we have dedicated very little time to the economic issue. In the cultural heritage sector, we have been very comfortable if we compare ourselves with the nature conservation sector. Our understanding of value – the key issue in heritage conservation – is very shallow, as our approach to economy matters. In the face of climate change and the collapse of the neoliberal model, there is an urgent need to preserve dignity through the conservation of heritage, and through the construction of future opportunities. Heritage preservation cannot be an effort of the knowledge elites – it is directly linked to the human groups who promote it, who need it and who ultimately justify it.

Carmen (Tr)

Initially, the local people, accustomed to tourists taking camel rides, didn't really understand what we were doing and why we were working. After seeing us come back a couple of times they understood what our interest is and now they work with us very intensively: they have understood that their heritage, their way of life and their culture is their legacy and that protecting them is also an opportunity for development.
We would like to have more impact on the economy of the oasis, but this is not in our hands.

Junko (DSW)

Our school teaches techniques on-site, restoring dry-stone walls in certain places. Many participants come from other areas. Many of them learned the technique and then restored walls back home. Some of them are now able to organise workshops in their communities in collaboration with us. Two young people have started working as builders and instructors. For our School, holding a workshop is a business in itself. Some of the participants are paid by their neighbours.

Dry-stone walls are only the support of agricultural fields – they do not directly affect the local economy. However, when you experience the work of restoring the dry-stone walls, you realise that in the past the terraced fields were constantly built and rebuilt. This changes the value of the landscape because you realise that it is not just a panorama, but the result of work. By working on their restoration, communities feel more connected to the place, because they organise their space using materials from the surrounding area.

Ángel (Md)

The revival of traditional construction techniques is a big aspiration, the greatest utopia perhaps. We are permanently eager to connect with techniques that are still alive, but which, I am afraid, are nowadays the subject of prejudice.

Transformations are under way in the Colca Valley. They are obviously visible in the use of new materials, which threaten the tangible identity. But, at the same time, professional teams and public institutions are beginning to understand the quality of traditional forms of construction, and regulatory requirements are becoming more demanding to save stone walls, thatched roofs, and native wood. They even begin to question whether to integrate some elements from other Andean regions that are not necessarily predominant in the valley, but which are – compared to concrete, brick and iron – much more respectful.

At the same time, it is not possible to maintain a construction identity until an ad hoc industry is developed, to nurture natural construction. If you review the *Manual básico de restauración y conservación de construcciones patrimoniales de tierra y piedra de Arica y Parinacota* (FAMSV 2012), you will immediately understand that there is a need for action in this area. It is not only the quarries that provide the stone or the earth that are of concern, but also the existence of prickly pears or cactus that will be employed in mixtures and mortars for joining adobe with adobe. To become sustainable for a community depends not only on being involved in the construction work, as they are, but also on being allowed to prepare stone or adobe materials, or specific organic mixtures to supply restoration sites. For want of immediate solutions, perhaps due to a lack of technical competence, materials that could be reused in the maintenance of houses, or in new construction, are not available.

Seen in this way, the answer to your questions implies a holistic vision of development. Public policy and community vision should cooperate in establishing locally adapted, 'on scale' norms. In our region between Chile and Peru, such norms should be able to tackle the technological issue, the crucial heritage factor, and earthquakes. Our possible intelligent and intuitive responses should embrace local materials and be based on reliable technology, so to make these constructions durable and efficient.

Kiichiro (MG)

Since I moved to Noto in 2004, I have been involved in two major activities. One is the rehabilitation of *dozō*, traditional earth-infill warehouses damaged by the earthquake of 2007. The second is learning and preserving the traditional *satoyama* lifestyle.

Beside the rehabilitation of warehouses, our activities have contributed to the continuation of the traditional *urushi* lacquerware industry: several *urushi* shops restarted their business accommodating the traditional production process in the warehouses we restored.

At the same time, our activities provided a place for learning traditional earth plastering techniques. As dry construction systems have become popular in the last fifty years, the number of both plaster craftsmen and jobs for them drastically declined. Pretty many plaster craftsmen from all over Japan came to help in our projects because they could learn traditional techniques, under one of the most known and skilled plaster craftsmen, Kuzumi Akira. Some of them are now working on the rehabilitation of *dozō* severely damaged by the East Japan Earthquake of 2011. And myself, as an architect, sometimes make a modern use of traditional plasters in my projects and employ craftsmen who developed their skills during *dozō* rehabilitation activities.

As for the activity on *satoyama* lifestyle, we try to introduce changes slowly and be as unobtrusive as possible regarding the current lifestyle. However, we observed several interesting changes during the last ten years.

One example is that local elderly farmers started to spare the rare plants in the process of mowing wild grass. They learnt they were endangered through survey activities led by an ecologist. On the other hand, the ecologists learned local traditional names and usages of plants from elderly natives.

Another positive change is that a few young people have moved in our village. Some of them had visited our village as students of the Tokyo Agriculture University, to make field research on farming villages, and were attracted by the lifestyle in tune with nature.

I think a certain number of young people in Japan are interested in living in a rural village, which did not occur when I was a student a few decades ago. The growth of the economy has stopped and there are lots of vacant houses in the countryside. Pretty many wise young people are now interested in making use of the existing structures in towns and even marginal villages.

It is not a rapid transformation; time is needed for change to happen in such small communities.

5.3.2 Interdisciplinary teams

Andrea B.

Associations and groups working on heritage restoration should not only be composed of specialists in construction, architecture, and building techniques, but also of people with ethnographic expertise and people with economic, heritage management and business development skills. In my opinion, without these contributions it is difficult to set up lasting processes. Do you agree, based on the experience of your NGO?

Yosuke

On the one hand you carry out your project mainly through practical work. On the other, the need to conduct analyses, document and disseminate the knowledge acquired through practical work is also very evident. Did you have collaborations with people from other disciplines beyond architecture and construction during workshops or in dissemination activities? If so, what was the result?

Chiara (SBAP)

The School of Specialisation was founded in 1989, and was declaredly interdisciplinary: at that time, it was not yet called transdisciplinary as we do today. Differently from the other schools that were being set up in those years, which called themselves restoration schools, our school was born with many souls: one historical, one linked to restoration, one with an attention to the territory and one linked to economic evaluation. Over time, other competences have been added, such as a focus on historical and traditional materials, an important contribution of information technology, courses on GIS and surveying, also using very advanced technologies. The initial idea of working together, bringing together different skills, continues. In addition to conventional lectures, every year – and this distinguishes us from other Italian postgraduate schools – we organise a field workshop, in a place that changes every three or four years so that we can acquire a good knowledge of the area. In these places, we carry out an integrated study, which must therefore be inter- and trans-disciplinary. In recent years we have had archaeological excavation camps; the activity of the archaeologist was flanked by survey activities, the study of archival documentation, territorial observation, the study of materials, etc. The integration between disciplines is therefore not a programmatic statement but is practised in the field. Obviously, all territories are not the same: depending on the region, one component may have more relevance than another. Even when the archaeologist leads, the find is considered in its context and is viewed in the light of different, highly integrated disciplines. We approach complex contexts. It is necessary to be many and with different disciplinary backgrounds in order not to risk losing their complexity or misrepresenting it.

Maurizio (AC)

We call the medieval village of Ghesc, where we have been working for years, a 'village-laboratory'. For us, the meaning of the term 'laboratory' goes beyond the concept of place where experiments are carried out that have to do with stone construction and traditional stone building techniques. At a time of rapid acceleration

in history, we look back with interest and without nostalgia to the last ten centuries. We look back at the history told by the stone buildings that surround us and search for lessons that we can bring into the future. Laboratory is therefore meant in the broadest sense imaginable, and – in addition to the technical disciplines – art, the humanities, botany, zoology, archeoastronomy, archaeology, etc. are also called in to participate. The experiences of past years have confirmed how much results can be amplified thanks to the integration of very different points of view.

Junko (DSW)

The Dry walling school has promoted the fact that masonry restoration encourages communication and is useful for team building, which has led us to create relationships with people outside the construction industry. In particular, companies are increasingly using our school for training in human resource development. This also generates an income for the Dry walling school, which contributes to the continuation of our activities.

Beatriz (FA)

I guess most of us here have a technical background as architects. Development and conservation projects with communities should be addressed by multidisciplinary teams because on the one hand you have technical issues such as structural and constructional ones, but on the other it is important to integrate a model that considers the value of buildings and techniques to a community, as well as the needs and the risks felt by that community. It is difficult for technicians alone to cover so many issues, so it is important that soft skills are involved when dealing with heritage actions.
In the region of Arica y Parinacota, the Fundación Altiplano has been working for the last twenty years on the valorisation of both tangible and intangible heritage. We work in multidisciplinary teams – anthropologists, art historians, video makers, engineers. Cristián Heinsen has a degree in literature, Bosco Gonzáles, who collaborates with us, is a sociologist – so we try to integrate different visions into our projects, going far beyond the technical problems of restoration. We have a dissemination department, which is responsible for making the value of such heritage known and for opening the village to visitors who may appreciate the indigenous life. This is mostly done through two festivals: a rural film festival called Arica Nativa (yearly in October) and the Arica Barroca Festival, an art, music and anthropology festival that focuses on the Barroco Andino heritage buildings, but promotes traditional techniques and heritage in general (yearly at the end of May).

Ángel (Md)

In the last twenty years, there has been an evolution from the architect's linear view to a transdisciplinary and open view. Our knowledge of the Colca Valley has not been limited to the field of architecture or planning, but has been extended to ethnographic, anthropological, and archaeological aspects. No work, no intervention is possible without the participation of a larger team, which not only generates a professional dialogue, but is able to connect with community knowledge. To all the fields encompassed in our academic training, we must add the fields embedded in the community's heritage: the community, now empowered in word and action,

collaborates in determining the course of projects, reflecting a greater authority legitimised by the knowledge inherited over the years. We have arrived with good intentions, but it has been very difficult for us to understand the wisdom or know-how that existed in the tectonics of the land and the community. Perhaps something is still missing regarding our understanding of the philosophical depths of the territory. I am not referring to poetry because the territory itself has a poetics, which does not necessarily need a human transmitter – to capture it you just need to perceive the vibrations that the space offers you, in its rituality, in its sacredness.

Carmen (Tr)

Interdisciplinary collaboration always enriches and allows a more objective view of the project. We are architects trained in heritage preservation and basic habitability, but we work together with people from other disciplines and other countries: architects from Lebanon; craftswomen from Portugal; historians from Mauritania; archaeologists from England; tourist guides from Morocco; designers from Russia. Usually, we architects think we can do everything... but this is not true and once you receive a contribution from a different point of view, the project grows and progresses. Obviously, associations and NGOs should be interdisciplinary, but this is not always easy due to the reduced budgets that force them to work for free. Sometimes small associations have been founded by specialists with homogenous professional profiles, maybe because work, interests and passion have joined them.

Hagino (MG)

I think it is important to work with various disciplines, not just with professionals related to architecture, because we are working not just to restore architecture, but to restore and sustain the society and the living environment. Also, I think it is important that this kind of multidisciplinarity is acquired inside each single person.

The Japanese word for peasant, *hyaku-sho*, literally means “one hundred family names”. The dictionary says that originally it meant “general public”, but in the 15th or 16th century it started meaning “farmer”: the farmers had lots of skills. It is true that my neighbour farmers can cultivate, fell trees, dig canals, build houses, repair woodworks, maintain machines, tie ropes, repair thatched roofs, plaster walls, hunt wild animals, and many other things. And they are proficient in all fields. My interpretation of *hyaku-sho* is therefore “people with one hundred expertises” or “skilled in one hundred trades”.

During the last fifty or one hundred years, specialisation has increased so rapidly that many people have forgotten the fundamental ability of being human. In order to survive in a future sustainable society, people need to become adaptable and flexible again, and be ready to take up diverse ideas, viewpoints, skills and techniques. I think this has become clear especially after the pandemic, which forced us to stay confined in small territories and deprived of direct interaction. In our time it is essential to search for a sustainable lifestyle. I’m trying to learn from the *hyaku-sho* concept and to follow a *hyaku-sho* lifestyle: not only to be an architect, but to do lot of things and refer to both traditional and scientific wisdom, and to practise harmonic ways of coexistence between nature and humans. I think everybody should have many abilities.

5.3.3 Tourism

Andrea B.

So far we have been speaking about topics closely related to the building trade and physical restoration, but, as I tried to express in my introduction, I see this as just a part of a broader engagement in local development. I would like to understand what your opinion about tourism is. Sometimes tourism is seen like the only development opportunity for a local community. It is taken for granted that if any income is going to be generated in the community, that will be thanks to foreign money – when I say foreign I don't necessary mean from another country – and that such money coming from without will help the local community to survive.

Chiara (SBAP)

I am extremely worried about what I call the "Grand Tour syndrome" or even – if you want – the "colonial syndrome", with which I mean looking for a sort of redefined landscape. We want to see something, and we are ready to pay the cost of the travel, the cost of the transformation, and even the cost of the maintenance, if the landscape we find at the end of the journey answers to an idea we have about it. Unfortunately, such an image may be absolutely different from the real landscape.

To better express what I mean, let's put it like this: we love the ruin, we want the ruin; we love the idea of the vineyards, we want to see the vineyards, which is, for example, a big problem for the Langhe, because their landscape packed with extensive vineyards is extremely recent. In the past it was a mosaic of different cultivations because peasants could not survive out of drinking wine only... they needed to eat bread, vegetables and maybe some fruit. The historical landscape was very different, a cultivation patchwork, but visitors – foreigners and Italians alike – don't care: they want to visit Chiantishire (or rather Baroloshire or Barberashire to apply the British ironical term to our own wine districts) and see them filled with vineyards. Is this a 'real' landscape or a 'false' landscape? Everybody loves a beautiful picture, but it is important to know when the picture is fictional.

Tourism is probably the easiest way to obtain visibility for a region and raise interest both in the monuments and the lesser heritage we are discussing today. Probably *ciabòt* are made easier to promote just because they lie in vineyards, and the nearby, beautiful forest can be described as attractive because it is a portion of the land which is different from the homogeneous vineyard. The forest is interesting not because of its historical value, but because it contrasts against the insisted continuity of the landscape.

In my opinion the question stands extremely sharp: what are we restoring, and what are we inventing? And what does the local population think of our intervention? There are not just insiders and outsiders, not only inhabitants and foreigners. There are also ancient inhabitants who emigrated to a city, or even to another country, and who later come back to their native land. Also the landscape they want to preserve is in fact idealised. It's an image transmitted by their

grandparents, or an idea they elaborated while they were away. A sort of fantasy, or a dream if you prefer, in which nostalgia as well as myth play their role.
I think there are at least three different levels: what we know directly (we can love or hate it – it is very unlikely that we are neutral); what we see when we visit an area; and what we think is affordable. In extremely lucky cases, these three visions match obtaining a sort of wonderful synthesis between desire, opportunities, and possibilities. In other cases, we must choose.
Somebody would say "don't create a new window because the wall must remain exactly as it was centuries ago", but nowadays we are used to have natural light to cook, to wash, to write, or simply because we want to see the panorama. The issue of the view is extremely recent, but everybody accepts to pay more for a house with a beautiful vista; I don't want to overlook my neighbour's kitchen, but in historical cities this was and remains common.
Every place has its own capacity to deal with transformation, even outside economical plans: throughout history the landscape, the cities, the monuments themselves, have always changed. Change happens all the time, and "no mummies" should be the slogan, while the vineyard countryside is a sort of mummy – in my very personal opinion. A very rentable one, to be true. As tourists, we adore to visit the wonderful Swiss landscapes, with cottages and cows so graciously placed that they might have been staged by a set designer.

Edvin (FG)

In the beginning, we really wanted visitors. But now I think tourism is endangering the sites and Gjirokastra as a whole.
Restoring or preserving buildings requires some time to draw the project and then to build it, like they did in the past: slowly and according to the traditional techniques. Now in some cases owners come and ask to build three more rooms to accommodate visitors within the next month. But theirs is a monument house, so time is needed to prepare the project. Because of this pressure there are cases where the project is too hasty and big changes in the structure of the house are made, at least in the interior.
Moreover, sometimes tourism changes the landscape. Some things pretend to be traditional, when in fact they aren't – they are just fake. For instance, in Albania we have now a lot of wine tasting tours in the vineyards. Wine was traditionally produced in Albania, but the country is not famous for its wine. Our wine is good but very unrefined. Now everyone wants to have a vineyard and a canteen for wine tasting because this is what tourists want. The same thing happens with cheese: I was surprised when I went in a village and they offered different cheeses for tasting, like yellow cheese with different fruits and so on. This is not Albania. Our traditional cheese is feta cheese, the white, plain one. This is pretending something is traditional when in fact it is not, and this affects the landscape a lot.
Because of tourism pressure, things like these are created and described as traditional. Therefore, I think tourism, if massive, is very dangerous, because it kills the authentic experience. I believe that we should fight for authentic things, not invented ones.

Some places in the country are not visited by tourists, despite having a potential and a need. In Gjirokastra I think we are at high risk because of the pressure of tourism: it's a small town of 35,000 people. It is a matter of balance.

Andrea B.

Firenze is much larger than Gjirokastra but the physical impact of tourism on the city is so huge that now you can hardly find a local person living in the city centre, you can even hardly find a real proximity shop in the city centre because the shops are selling bullshit to the tourists or have been converted into fake 'typical' restaurants. This is what happens in mature tourists' cities, and it's not by chance that the residents of cities like Barcelona or Palma de Mallorca are now rising against tourism because tourism has devastated the local people's opportunity to afford a rent in the historical centre; residents can't even roam freely because of people taking pictures everywhere. In Gjirokastra you're feeling in danger, but it may be much worse.
Of course, in Gjirokastra, people were not wealthy in the communist era. Now a lot of tourists come, they pay to visit the vineyards. Villagers who have lived in poverty don't feel bad about earning money from the tourists. They will transform their land into a vineyard to meet the tourists' (supposed) expectations. What should one do about this? How could one control this phenomenon?
As we said, we don't have solutions to that. My opinion is that if the local economy is strong there is not much need for foreign money. Foreign money is welcome but it's just an addition. When foreign money makes most of the economy, then you are at risk. It is good to use tourism, to leverage a local economy, as it was done in Gjirokastra, but temporarily, to give an initial breakthrough. From that a truly circular local economy should rise and flourish. Otherwise, you are in danger. Imagine: in a single year a few planes are burst by terrorism. The world tourism collapses because suddenly nobody wants to fly anymore. Or there is a big energy crisis and the price of fuel skyrockets and again, nobody wants to fly anymore because it's not affordable. Or whatever. I mean, whenever you depend on foreign money, you are weak because you have no control on the source of your wealth. So, it is a good thing to take advantage of your heritage and earn some money from the tourists but whenever the share collected from tourism is too large you must know you are at risk, maybe not tomorrow, maybe not next year, but sometime.

Maurizio (AC)

I think we are all tourists here. Let me explain which kind of tourists we are. Historically there were a few tourists in a few places. Then tourism changed into contemporary mass tourism: tourism for everyone, everywhere in the world. I believe we are close to a new era of tourism in which different kinds of tourists will coexist. We must realise that tourism is there and, of course, it can be an opportunity.
I chose to live in the countryside and my employment opportunities are limited compared to people living in an urban area. Maybe tourism can be a part of my income. Of course, we need to be careful: we have to be able to choose the right type of tourism, and build and take action in accordance with it. We should also

promote authentic values. This is an opportunity especially in well-preserved areas such as the one where we work.
The population of metropolitan areas is still increasing at the global scale. In 2007, almost 50 percent of the world's population was living in urban areas: according to the UN's prospects, this percentage will increase to 68 percent by 2050.
In Italy, I believe that some right actions might convince some people who now live in metropolitan areas to move to rural areas that had been abandoned. Something is moving in this direction, and I am optimistic for the future.

Nadia (BdF)

In our region, it is difficult to imagine a risk of a future invasion of tourists, because now it is out of any mass tourism circuit; however, the nearby Bassa Langa, where in the last 10-15 years tourism boomed, shows that this cannot be ruled out.
Our project aims at making the community aware of the importance of preserving the built environment and the landscape, but also at prompting local authorities and stakeholders to work on projects to attract a 'responsible' tourism, one that is sensible to culture, to art, and to the authenticity of the land.
For example, the path along which we would like to create a disperse hotel connects not only natural and landscape highlights, but also some interesting businesses. In this way tourists would visit local entrepreneurs such as cheese or wine producers and support them economically.
If the local community had its own solid economy and social life, potential negative consequences of tourism would be limited, but this is not the case of our region where agriculture has collapsed excepted the cultivation of hazelnuts, for which there is still a high demand. A few other small activities survive.
However, those who remain are very connected to the land. In fact, it is still difficult buying land or rural houses. Nevertheless, local businesses are mostly small-sized, so tourism could provide a great development opportunity.
I think that the development of a new kind of agriculture and other rural activities could potentially be very positive for the area. For example, a group of small landholders created an association to restart the production of almonds and wine – both were traditional products but are nowadays forgotten and could give a good economic return despite the huge initial investment required on terraced hills.
Some locals are managing to live on agriculture, mixed with tourism: they rent rooms, they breed animals, they grow something.
Our school is attracting "a new generation of tourists": people from Workaway – which is a platform that allows members to arrange home stays and cultural exchanges (volunteers or "Workawayers" are expected to contribute a pre-agreed amount of time per day in exchange for lodging and food, which is provided by their host) –, young people of the European Solidarity Corps, students, and in general people who are looking for training and practical experience.
I think that this kind of tourism will grow in the future, maybe more than traditional ways of travelling, and this can bring a lot of advantages compared to mass tourism in terms of cultural exchange, and respect of the environment and the local community. The inflow of young visitors is particularly relevant in a badly depopulated area. Old people are dying and there are hardly new generations. All those who could leave already left.

Filipa (BdF)

In recent years, not only the population decreased but also services that are essential to keep residents (such as schools, hospitals, public offices, etc.) have been shutting off. A high percentage of those who went away for higher education did not return.
Of course, internet brought the possibility of remote working but if you want to start a family, the services should not be dozens of kilometres away. The income of those who remain is related with the land.
The seasonality of these places is also a problem, since in summer there are lots of tourists and events but in winter shops are closed and there is not much social life going on. This situation is common to other inland areas, and basic services should be provided to reverse the current scenario and attract immigrants.

Junko (DSW)

I deal with terraces, so it is a bit difficult to talk about income through tourism: tourists do not pay for the consumption of the landscape: one pays a ticket to visit a museum, but not to see a landscape. Buses take tourists to see famous terraced landscapes, but these visits don't leave any money on the spot. If tourists come, it is the tourist agency that makes the money, not the farmers. Furthermore, in Japan we do not have a system like agrotourism, and in general, we have no way of appreciating the value of the landscape economically.
For the inhabitants of terraced areas, the only way to survive is to sell their agricultural products (rice, vegetables, etc.) with some added local value. Instead, in Japan nowadays, administrations are promoting productivity and industrial agriculture. Therefore, the search for added quality (as opposed to quantity) from the locals' side goes against the national agricultural policies. That's a problem. From this point of view, Japan is more than thirty years behind Europe.
During the nine years I lived in Tokushima, I worked on planning for revitalising rural villages. However, I perceived a limit: in this context of agricultural policy that seeks only production efficiency based on large extensions, the promotion of local foods just creates local competition, between local actors who are looking for urban customers. Instead, the competition should oppose the highlands and the lowlands, and industrial agriculture should be involved in the match. Urbanites must learn to buy products from mountain areas to safeguard their culture and environment, rather than buy agricultural products grown in the lowlands where efficiency is all what is sought. Otherwise, rural villages would be consumed in the fratricidal competition to be chosen by urbanites. And if the urbanites' sense of value is incorrect, the aforementioned competition often leads to the environmental destruction in the villages.
I think that agricultural policies in Japan must change, which is why I am currently writing about the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union and the relationship between environment and agriculture. Doing this is also very important for the conservation of dry-stone walls.

Beatriz (FA)

San Pedro de Atacama is one of the most famous tourist destinations in Chile, and an example of mass tourism. We have been restoring the church there.

It is an oasis in the middle of the desert exploited by tourism already during the 20th century. In summer, at the peak of the tourist season, water is cut off for the local people living in villages around San Pedro, there is no gas in the gas station, there is no money at the ATM, so nobody lives there anymore.
For Fundación Altiplano, San Pedro was an example of what to avoid, to not make the same mistakes in Arica and Parinacota.
We think that tourism can be a part of the solution for developing some villages, but only if well planned, and respectful to environmental values. We are also trying to promote experiential tourism, which is working in Titicaca and many other sites where tourists aren't disconnected from the real life of people. They learn how to make wine, how to cook, how to farm the lamas... It seems there is a change of mentality, and that visitors enjoy coming to rural areas to live more calmly and re-establish some connection with nature.
In my lecture I spoke of four ecosystems connected by the Ruta de la Plata which was essentially a trade route; this economic linkage is still working. The difference with the past is that the interaction is centralised in the main city, at the sea level. Perhaps this interaction should occur at all the four levels, and thus contribute to the development of small towns that are suffering from depopulation. If this interaction worked in conjunction with the re-activation of the Ruta de la Plata, sustainable tourism might contribute a great opportunity for local development.

Ángel (Md)

Undoubtedly, the components of territorial development are diverse, and this assertion is valid in any part of the world. Therefore, believing that only tourism could solve a large part of community aspirations and/or needs is a mirage.
Yet, it cannot be denied that tourism can, to a certain extent, contribute to the self-esteem, pride, and sense of belonging of local communities. Tourism is often designed as a consensual charity project.
The Colca Valley is a polysemic palimpsest in formation, which contains an enormous material and immaterial wealth; therefore, its opportunities are diverse despite the latent threats. From the year 2000 until February 2020, tourism had been progressively growing, up to more than 350,000 visitors per year. The impact on many Colqueños has been ostensible.
It is totally externally controlled activities, which depend on quite unpredictable conditions, that they make local economies vulnerable; and in fact, during the pandemic, tourism activities have collapsed. Things will never be the same again. However, who knows, in the medium term, we might find out new ways of tourism based on a radical rethinking of the concept of "territories to visit and recognise". Of course, we need to be careful with what the communities think of tourism. We must accompany them, not disturb them with city abstractions.
However, the richness of Collaguas and Cabanas territory does not exclusively benefit tourism. The main vocation is agriculture. At present, about 8,000 hectares are dedicated to the production of corn, potatoes, barley, quinoa, beans, among other crops. In addition, crafts have gained planetary recognition that deserves an attentive rethinking, to make them lucrative. Likewise, the local cultural strengths linked to landscape resources, seem to ensure unmatched potential for the construction sector. Consequently, the circular economy is latent and should be made actual.

Carmen (Tr)

Terrachidia works with and for locals, as well as with and for non-locals. Our training activities link locals and non-locals in a common project whose outcome will benefice them all. Tourism alone is too simple a development perspective that will not enrich the community and will not create jobs in the medium-long term. A development project should consider cultural values, natural resources and the community's capacities to empower their village, their culture and their local economy. Once this is set up, tourism will come as a natural consequence and will be beneficial.

Eltjana (GO2)

Recently we have undertaken another project on sustainable tourism and green entrepreneurship aiming to to enforce the circular economy principles, and to preserve the environment and cultural landscape.
As part of this initiative, we are developing small interventions that promote recycling, reusing, and reducing. By encouraging these practices, we hope to inspire locals to recognise the value of their heritage and take an active role in sustaining it, e.g. we proposed to repurpose the abandoned granaries that used to store animal feed as self-informative corners for tourists.

Pimpim (THF)

I'm curious about the impact of the tourism in Gostuša. Is it already becoming a tourist area? What is the impact? How do the residents see this? How is your organisation seen? How is the park seen? How are the tourists seen? How does tourism affect your project?

Elena (ARF)

In this site there is no mass tourism, there are just five guest houses with five beds each. Not much people can be accommodated there, but a lot of people are coming on day visits. We want tourism to grow, but in the last year for example, when the borders were closed and Serbian people could not go abroad for holidays, there were so many tourists in the area that the local system could not take them in and manage them – it was just not ready.
Tourism can be good for the local community but bad for the nature. This problem needs to be tackled at a higher level first and then implemented at the village scale.

5.3.4 What after?

Andrea B.

Obviously if the initiative is managed by a local group, i.e. composed and led by people from a certain community, my question does not apply because continuity over time can be expected.
But if instead, as it happens in many instances, after having been working in a certain area for years, you have been successful in restoring a number of buildings and you move to another project, or if for some reason your organisation collapses, dissolves or loses its initial drive, what do you leave behind, as your intangible legacy to the community?
How do you empower the local community?
Has the community acquired tools and skills that allow it to continue in its own way the work you initiated?
Will they be able to appropriate their own destiny, and have control on their future?
And at what point in this process do you feel you are?

Emiliano

Once knowledge has been transferred or collectively generated, and work has been completed, how do you follow up and monitor the preservation of heritage, to see if this learning has continued developing?
In transmitting the acquired knowledge, does the work you have done continue in the subsequent actions of the community?
Are the building techniques actually adopted by the locals?

Chiara (SBAP)

It's not easy at all to answer these questions... only posterity probably could seriously evaluate the quality and the 'durability' of our work. Heritage is the material we work with; but it is hard to resolve whether we'll leave some heritage after us.
If we have correctly approached the territorial complexity, it's possible we have also encouraged locals to consider their landscape (I mean both the physical dimension and the cultural heritage characterising the country so deeply to define its specificity) with more awareness. It's a matter of consciousness, and the more the insiders really know their land, the more they are able to envisage interventions, better than us, who are inevitably outsiders. It's again the relationship between the landscape and the image of the same landscape, I was recalling before: for us, who do not live in the area, it remains extremely hard to separate reality from 'prejudice' (in the etymological sense of the word: the judgment formed before knowledge) we formed in our minds in dependence from what we had heard, read – from savant essays to leisure novels – or seen in photos, paintings, engravings, etc.
Residents know their land by heart; they can decide to ignore, or even to refuse it, but they know about it, and this is their wealth. So I'm quite convinced that, if they wear a good pair of glasses, therefore creating a minimum of detachment that can provide a little more of objectiveness, they will be able to choose the better way to ensure the necessary 'durability' to both our work (the years we spent working in their area) and their own work (the actions they will decide to take). Our job, then, could be to offer such goggles.

Carmen (Tr)

The buildings we have restored do exist and locals use them, meet inside them, and pray close to them. Several spaces have been recovered for the community; this is objective.

When it comes to intangible heritage, the answer is not that easy. I think that asking locals to be our masters and teachers has reinforced their self-esteem and raised awareness about their culture and capacities. This should be a push for them to lead other projects and initiatives even when we are not there, but this has only occurred on a few occasions. They acknowledge our collaboration as an initiative we lead, and they just follow us. New suggestions and creative ideas from locals would be very welcome.

My impression is that after these small projects or collaborations something takes hold, and that there is some continuity on the part of the population. When we leave, however, most of them cannot create opportunities for themselves, such as starting a business, and the local government itself is not interested in this. To be sure, I suspect that the same would happen in Spain.

However, in the M'hamid oasis, thanks also to our encouragement, some women started two cooperatives, opened a couple of shops, and now sell their products both to tourists and the local population.

On the other hand, I notice that the students and professionals who participate in our workshops are touched by the first contact with this heritage and take this experience with them for the rest of their lives. Many of them are very young, 20-22 years old, and after this experience they continue this path.

Beatriz (FA)

These are difficult questions. Our work is based on three legs, and we need all three: one is economical, one is technical, and one is social. They need one another to keep the balance. For now, we are the technicians, but in the future, we will leave the place, Fundación Altiplano doesn't want to exist for the eternity and this is why we are creating the Escuela de Conservación Sostenible Saraña. It is supposed to teach people the techniques, the materials, how to make a restoration project but also leadership, empowerment... now we are even building a kitchen for traditional cooking. The technicians want to leave someday and now we are in the process of passing the knowledge over to the communities. The community must remain, but they need some empowerment and leadership.

A committee was recently created with representatives of all the villages to control the ongoing tourism and restoration programs, to make projects by themselves. They do not need us anymore. For the moment, there are donations and government grants, but we don't know how to ensure the funding from the government in the future. We wish that the restoration process can create a local economy.

Edvin (FG)

One of the words I like to use when I talk about the work of the Gjirokastra Foundation is catalyst: it is part of our mission. When we started working in Gjirokastra we were alone, but now a lot of actors are very able to carry out activities and work in the area. Sometimes I have the feeling that we somehow completed our mission: we are still supervising and advising them, but they can

work independently. You have to create space for other people to be involved. The process will go its own way, and you feel that you left something behind which is very good. However, it is not a goodbye. It is a good feeling to have accompanied groups that are now important actors in town and carry on their work independently; at the same time, one can feel a bit nostalgic, I admit.

Junko (DSW)

My situation is probably a little different because I don't work in a stable location. I started this project thinking about the moment I would leave the place. In fact, I started when I lived in Tokushima, but now I live in Tokyo – I have already moved. But the project continues because my activities are not tied to a single place: I created a system to continue the activity that I started.
In each place we work with our School there are local protagonists of the activities who learn how to build dry-stone walls and then continue their own. We often go back to the same places to allow the locals to reach an autonomous capacity. We take care of all Japan; local inhabitants take care of their place.

Maurizio (AC)

In this adventure, I feel like a guest of the place rather than someone who owns the place. I feel that I am a part of something that is moving on. Maybe in fifty years Ghesc will be different and in one hundred it will be abandoned again, but this is history. It is not very important. I am probably shifting the discussion to a more philosophical level, but what I am doing here is more for myself than for the place that I restored. I am doing something to live better, and I am following my principles. If in this path I can share my experience and inspire someone else, this is the highest result that I can reach. It is important doing something in a place, but the most important thing is doing something to find yourself and doing it the right way. Then it becomes a part of history.

Lorenzo (BdF)

Being part of this process is very interesting for us, because, in a sense, we are taking care of a landscape and a heritage site that before us nobody was taking care of. Our work is an attempt to demonstrate to the inhabitants how their traditional buildings can be enhanced without seeing them as a burden. We are talking to people about very practical actions that have to do with building and restoring houses with stone and wood. I don't think there is anything more tangible than this. Yet, for us it is very important to convey emotions, because they could boost similar practices somewhere else.
The result of these practices is very difficult to predict. There are so many variables in these processes, for example your success in raising funds, and in rising the awareness of local institutions who would support. At least, we can say that we have already had an excellent feedback: the creation of the Banca del Fare project in Sardegna, thanks to two extraordinary people who have chosen to use our method there.

Ángel (Md)

We obviously cultivated friendships and affections, but pretending that what was said and shared has remained would be an overestimation.
I believe that the greatest accomplishment is to have become a kind of external spokesperson for the values of these territories. I gave part of my soul and some of my knowledge to those lands. Fortunately, I gained more than I believe to have contributed.
Even now and from where I am, I continue to collaborate with tangible and intangible interactions, in addition to contributing research, plans, projects and publications. In a certain way, it is moving, from the imagined to the concrete. Contributions flow and are disinterested.
I believe that the best contribution to the empowerment of local communities is the multi-scalar management and the productive reconversion of the territories, in full harmony with local knowledge and contemporary planetary knowledge. In this way, the territorial actors would once again become environmental authors and doers allowing, consequently, greater agency in each of the components of sustainability and, above all, political and technical participation would occur. This would force them to account for their actions instead of asking for explanations from 'outsiders' or 'foreigners' about their own future prospects.
Urbanity has prevailed over rurality, but there is no rational being in the world that is unaware of the vitality of the interdependence of these polarities. At some point, hopefully soon, countries will have to converge on a renewed imaginary. A strategic return to rurality would be an intelligible move to ensure food and sustainability. In this regard, it is possible to be optimistic amid the uncertainty regarding the continuity of life in peripheral spaces.

Kiichiro (MG)

Maruyam a-Gumi has not yet accomplished a mature ability for monitoring the ramifications of its activities in terms of knowledge development. Anyway, I think that the build-up of research and relations does not need to hurry up; it takes time to live in practice what one has learnt. We do not need to rush to get a result.
It is hard to hand over the activities (even if they went on for a long time and in the same place), especially in case they were led by people from outside.
Giving an example in which I am involved, the rehabilitation of *dozō* after the earthquake of 2007 involved many plasterers from all over Japan, attracted by the opportunity to learn from experienced masters. However, most of the local plasterers had been too busy in repairing buildings in the conventional ways to join and learn the traditional techniques. We missed the opportunity to revitalise the traditional techniques in the area. I should have asked local craftspeople to join our project more strongly. This experience taught me the importance of embarking people from different places (natives and outsiders from various areas), and also from different backgrounds (not only craftspeople).

5.3.5 NGOs' planning for future

Andrea B.

What you have been doing has a lot to do with working on past things, which are now available to our pleasure, to our fruition, to our operation. I would like to tell the same story in another way and say that you are not working on past heritage – you are working on the future of these communities and their heritage. In some of your words I felt that there is a project of the future and I'm very interested in hearing about how, working on the heritage of the past is a part of planning for a sustainable future.

Americo (PI)

Of course, we have plans for the future, otherwise we would stop working tomorrow. We mainly work on natural conservation with a specific focus on some species.
Regarding architecture and traditional techniques, we like to see ourselves as a catalyser for the region. We like to show to locals that we are inviting people from outside, and we try to involve the residents on work with these techniques by asking, "Why do you think these people came from outside to do the work you would normally do?". We also show the importance of local traditions to avoid that the very few young people who still live here to leave. At the same time, we try to attract people here and try to make them fall in love with region. Without people there can't be a future.
We also have plans regarding the traditional pigeon houses. If we reconstructed them just because they are beautiful, in some years we would have to redo the job because there would be no maintenance. We have to find new uses for them, respecting their outer appearance. Where such new uses are viable, we fund those who experiment with these.

Maurizio (AC)

Our problem is that many villages are completely abandoned, and we cannot force anyone to go and live there. We can just show that it is possible, and that the quality of life can be higher than in urban areas.
In this sense, our mission completely points to the future, and we hope this can happen because it is a pity to see centuries-old buildings fall down. If this does not happen, there will be ruins all over the place, as it was the case with other civilisations in the past. We cannot do more than that.

Pimpim (THF)

The sustainability of the future is connected to the sustainability of preserving the traditions and using the traditional materials. Building traditions and memories of the past can be useful to preserve the environment, because for example traditional materials (at least in the area where we work) have less impact on the environment than cement, that is imported from somewhere else. You can make mud bricks; their use entails a minimal impact on the environment.
In terms of conservation, traditional houses made by wood, stone and adobe can last for a very long time. While the new buildings start showing problems of maintenance very soon, and anyway don't last very long because they are not high

quality. Even where they are, as in Europe, cement buildings are very difficult to conserve. The idea that cement is a very strong material that can last for eternity, may not be accurate.
I think it is very important to inform people not only about which decisions to take for new building, but also about how to keep their old house. People are often not informed on this; they just show a biased preference for what is new. But after they move to their new cement building, they fall sick with rheumatism or other diseases, because in spite of the altitude buildings lack central heating. Then they finally figure out that the thermal performance of traditional buildings was much better. Providing information so that people take appropriate decisions is a relevant goal, as it is to show the environmental impact of natural materials – all of us should do something against climate change and to protect the fragile environment of the Himalayan region.

Yutaka (THF)

About the building materials: the Indian government encourages people to build concrete constructions (which are called pucca houses, meaning "strong houses"). Instead, the vernacular architecture, which is made with natural materials, is regarded as very weak. Under the modernisation wave, everybody made the shift to concrete.
Our location is extremely cold and dry – the town sits at 3550 m above the sea level. We have very harsh winters, so concrete buildings are not suitable. Many people get joint pain because of the cold. People living in concrete buildings need additional energy to keep the temperature up. The walls of traditional buildings are very thick, typically 60 to 90 cm, and are made by material like stone and mud with a much better thermal performance than concrete. Moreover, they were designed so to receive the maximum amount of sunlight. In traditional buildings the use of local materials creates spaces that best fit in the local environment.

Elena (ARF)

Researching on built heritage, we go further and try to understand the people's life. There is not only the built heritage: people are the most important element, because if there are no people in those villages, what is the point of our work? The most important thing we have done is realising this. We need to help each other and learn from each other. This is the only way to plan a good future both for the people and the heritage, and to design a good life with the heritage.

Marta (Tr)

For me traditional construction is obviously the point and is my task both of the present and the future. Traditional construction uses local materials and is better for the environment.
Moreover, in our projects we have limited budgets. If we used imported materials like concrete, we'd have to spend a lot of money. If we use local materials, we have the chance to pay much more money to the local labourers and generate local development. This is useful for the future; if you don't generate human development maybe traditional construction will die. To keep traditional crafts alive and pass them to the future, people must be able to make a living out of them.

Beatriz (FA)

Preservation and conservation of traditional heritage are ways to sustainable development – I advocate this not on the basis of a romantic vision, but very practically.
In the Andean communities the value of traditional techniques and of natural materials have undergone a crisis due to the use of industrial materials.
We helped to create economic development and employment. For example, in Codpa a woman built a hotel with natural resources and traditional techniques, and now hosts guests from everywhere. In Tacora, 4000 m above the sea level, we worked at the restoration of heritage façades: some of the local young participants created a traditional construction company to work by themselves.
I think that heritage can provide solutions for the social, economic, ecological, and environmental development of places.

Ionas (BI)

I think that for us it is important to consolidate our links with Epirus and in particular with Tzoumerka, as it is the place where we have worked the most so far. Nevertheless, we have also placed a lot of energy and time in other places. I did not present these projects, but we have also worked on a few islands and their vernacular settlements, especially in the Aegean; during the past two years we have been running a project on the islands of Therasia and Santorini. We feel we have gained a lot of knowledge through this kind of 'opening' to geographies other than Epirus, but I think in this moment we're really in need of a regrouping, working on our base in Epirus. Within this framework we will try to build upon the findings of the past years, and also to become more viable as an organisation (fundraising always takes a lot of effort).
Finally, a long-term goal of our team is to bring local and traditional ways of building closer to contemporary construction practices. Currently there is internationally a growing interest in such explorations; for example, around how natural materials and traditional forms of building knowledge can be introduced in contemporary urban contexts. We are interested in following such developments and in contributing to them through our own experience of how such questions present themselves in the Greek, Balkan and Mediterranean contexts.

Eltjana (GO2)

Securing funding for our initiatives poses a significant challenge. Our primary step will be to apply for an EPA project in collaboration with our cross-border partners in Kosovo and Montenegro aiming to document the cultural landscapes in the valleys of Albanian Alps, including kullas (traditional tower houses). The common methodology would be expanded to the valorisation of other cultural landscapes throughout the country. The next step will focus on restoration: we wish to demonstrate a successful conservation model of one kulla, a water mill, or some dry-stone walls. Community members are enthusiastic about implementing traditional conservation techniques, but it is crucial to showcase a completed and successful project to inspire confidence in these methods.

Regarding the actors, undoubtedly, this undertaking requires substantial investment, and it will be important to negotiate with property owners, who may even consider co-financing the restoration work.
We also aim to involve young professionals such as architects, archaeologists, and anthropologists in our projects. Their expertise will help disseminate valuable knowledge and skills, benefiting not only the Albanian Alps but also other mountain regions in the South.
Additionally, we are actively seeking opportunities to establish long-lasting partnerships that facilitate collaboration, knowledge exchange, and mutual learning among stakeholders. By fostering these relationships, we hope to enhance our collective efforts in preserving cultural heritage and promoting sustainable development in the region.

Final discussion



Paolo Vitti



Umberto Bonomo

Paolo

First, let's examine the term "development" itself, as it raises several fundamental issues. What do we mean by development? Often, we equate it with ideas of evolution, expansion, or progress. But in today's world, "development" is primarily linked to economic growth, an objective that, in many respects, has reached its limits. For those of us in privileged societies, living standards are already high. So, where exactly are we trying to go beyond this point? Do we genuinely believe that further economic growth will bring happiness and well-being to communities that have not reached the same level of material wealth?

Rather than focusing solely on economic growth, I believe we should prioritize the development of society and human relationships. To create environments where we can live and work in harmony, we must foster healthy, supportive relationships – a dimension that has been neglected in many developed societies. Human connections, especially in the spaces where we live, have suffered significantly.

When we look at our heritage and study past societies, we must ask ourselves: What aspects of these traditions are healthy, and which are not? What values have we built in developed countries, and what strengths do so-called "underdeveloped" countries still retain?

Those of us who work as experts, professionals, NGOs, or concerned citizens recognize the value of heritage, which extends far beyond the beauty of historical places. Heritage represents a model of human connection that we could benefit from reclaiming in our own lives. It highlights a quality of relationships that has been lost – a quality that many traditional communities have managed to preserve, and which gives their way of life a unique significance.

While I acknowledge that modern progress has brought many benefits, I also see a need to recover certain simple values that we have cast aside. Cultural heritage offers insights into many of today's pressing issues, like climate change. In historical societies, we often find examples of sustainable living. "Sustainability" was not a concept they discussed, because their way of life inherently prioritized balance with the environment.

We should question the ways we design and build our current living spaces and ask ourselves what materials and technologies truly serve a sustainable future. Too often, the modern building industry uses materials and techniques that make it nearly impossible to incorporate traditional methods. This approach disregards the lessons from the past – lessons we desperately need as we move forward.

Communities with meaningful traditions exist worldwide, even near mega-cities. These communities hold values we urgently need to cultivate a better world.

Associations play a crucial role in this process. They are embedded within communities, understand them deeply, and are well-positioned to engage in meaningful dialogue. Experts, governments, and policymakers need to collaborate with such associations, recognizing the social and cultural support they provide. This cooperation is essential to developing heritage projects that genuinely resonate.

Umberto

I support the idea of development related with heritage because here in Chile the means to operate in the heritage sector are nil. We need to support heritage policies and projects with numbers, money, human resources, innovation, investigation, technologies. I am not suggesting that industrial development or tourism industry would be viable perspectives. We need to demonstrate that a different kind of development is possible, one that is connected with communities. We want to be able to support our activities in the very fragile contexts where we work. Fragile but at the same time very rich in identity and sustainability.
I am speaking from a university. For people like those at Fundación Altiplano, who work in the field, in the mountains, this problem is magnified. It is incredible what we suffer and how much we succeed to do with nothing.
But I agree with you, Paolo: we need to use the idea of development responsibly.

Paolo

In both common thinking and governmental practice, the concept of development is typically seen as moving in a single direction. However, we urgently need to shift this trajectory. While we all want to improve communities' living conditions, we sometimes overlook the fact that the lifestyle in these fragile communities often holds values we lack in our modern cities. It's essential to avoid a colonialist mindset.
One critical issue is the lack of cultural and heritage relevance in public policies. Currently, culture and cultural heritage are not central to these policies. At Europa Nostra, we are working hard to bring these issues to the forefront of the political agenda. For example, in 2021, we published a green paper highlighting that the European Green Deal document doesn't even mention the word "culture" (Potts 2021).
Our discussions on these topics are undoubtedly important, yet they often go unrecognized, and we're now facing a dramatic shift in scale. When we examine vernacular architecture or historic landscapes, we're looking at places that starkly contrast with the aesthetic challenges we encounter in many urban areas today. The images we've seen today are stunning, yet I believe it's crucial to consider the reality outside this room. We must address this lack of aesthetic quality and rethink our approach given the pressures of a growing global population. With climate change, we're likely to see an increase in megacities. Can vernacular architecture really address this? Are the issues we're currently discussing truly at the core of what we'll face in the future? Why do we study cultural heritage, and what role can it play in tackling these challenges?
These are questions we must prioritize, as they concern the future and the next generations. I'm simply posing these questions – I don't have all the answers. We're here to seek them together, through study and reflection.

As Eltjana mentioned (GO2 4.10), we need to document, learn, and preserve, which aligns entirely with what I've dedicated my life to. But the challenge now lies in ensuring that culture and heritage are truly relevant in our governmental policies. For instance, the European Union's policies for greening the built environment, while well-intentioned, have inadvertently increased labor and material costs, at least in Italy. These measures often push in the opposite direction of our discussions, neglecting historical insights.
When we face a problem, the prevalent approach in many architecture and engineering schools is to turn to advanced technology. Yet the buildings we're examining today were built with basic techniques and a profound connection to their environment. This fundamental relationship is something we must reconsider as we look toward sustainable solutions for our built environment.

Umberto

It's different to talk about heritage with a community in the countryside or in a school of architecture. I think that the very important issue that we don't analyse, and we don't work out enough in our schools, is the issue of beauty. We don't talk about beauty anymore in universities, we have lost the tradition of Beaux-Arts. We are even proud to have broken with the Beaux-Arts.
The idea of beauty is fundamental when you make projects for the future. With my students I speak about heritage as a time machine: if we assume we are in Firenze in the 16th century, we see that the problem was power, economy and beauty – and the importance of beauty in that moment, in that city, made Firenze what we know and protect today, and made it a UNESCO site.
I think it's important to talk about beauty with our students to made them responsible of the beauty that they leave for the city and the society of the future.

Paolo

I'm back because you called me here. I teach at the University of Notre Dame, home to the only remaining Beaux-Arts school of architecture today. I'm in full agreement with you on the importance of beauty. I'd also like to recall that in 2021 Ursula von der Leyen launched the "New European Bauhaus" program, aiming to reintroduce that long-neglected category, beauty, into public discourse. Yet, what stands out is that current discussions around beauty often avoid engaging with history. Modernist architects strive to achieve beauty through originality and innovation but tend to dismiss the idea that creativity might also include a dialogue with the past. Their approach consistently leans toward inventing without precedent, without recognizing the value that historical continuity can offer.
In Florence, a city where enlightened bankers first began to recognize the cultural value of art and beauty, history was not treated as a separate, static entity. The past was part of the regeneration of arts. During the Enlightenment, however, the concept of the past underwent a profound transformation. Thinkers like Baumgarten and Kant began to theorize and categorize history and introduced a rift between the past and the present. The past was increasingly seen as something to be studied and analyzed rather than something in continuity with the present. This separation laid the groundwork for a view of the past as an 'other,' which gradually influenced modernist thinking in the early 20th century.

By the 1920s, architects and urban planners increasingly viewed history as a relic rather than a source of inspiration. They envisioned a new world of cities shaped by innovative materials like concrete, iron, and glass, and shaped by energy waste systems. This dream was fueled by the belief that modern materials and technologies could create ideal environments – a world superior to the one inherited from the past. However, after a century, we've seen the consequences: materials that were once the foundation of that dream – concrete, iron, and glass – are among the most unsustainable on earth, contributing heavily to environmental crises like climate change. Urban designs inspired by idealistic visions, such as Le Corbusier's Ville Radieuse, have often resulted in neighborhoods with significant social challenges and diminished quality of life.
Now, perhaps more than ever, it's essential to reconsider what beauty means and to understand its potential to connect us with a sustainable and meaningful sense of place and history.

Final remark



Andrea Bocco

We went through a full palette of experiences. Different paths have been taken for more or less long periods of involvement and engagement in local processes. I think that all of these have taken root in local contexts and made a whole bunch of new initiatives start, or at least promoted them. This is extremely in tune with the general aim of this series of seminars. We are not interested in monument preservation per se, we are rather interested in the social ramifications of the preservation activities which nevertheless should be based on respect and knowledge. The single word I want to use here is "care." It seems to me it is a keyword for describing what we have been speaking about in these seminars. It is an act of taking care of, and even of healing. All of you met something which you felt deserved some attention, some practical acts of care. These things you acknowledged as something valuable, which you got from the past and took upon yourselves to bring them to some future meaning and existence. These care actions stemmed out of some spontaneous movement of your soul but are certainly part of a vision, although not always intended and clearly decided from the beginning. This vision was there, even if latent. Of course, care cannot just rely on intention. Good will is not enough: one needs to have or to develop proper techniques, know-hows, skills, otherwise an intervention on such valuable heritage items would be irresponsible. The objects of care are at once technical – the shells where activities are carried out, where people live, the building envelope, the material skeleton – and social – the animals living inside the shell, with all their interactions and beliefs. In this act of care – that is, of taking the responsibility of managing for the better such existing heritage and transmitting it to future generations, to some kind of new sustainable balance – I see the highest scope of your work. This is also what I recognise as keeping together all of these efforts, all the wonderful things you are doing in your areas and communities. We began speaking about the past, but it seems to me that we have actually spoken about the future.


Hagino Kiichiro 2008

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